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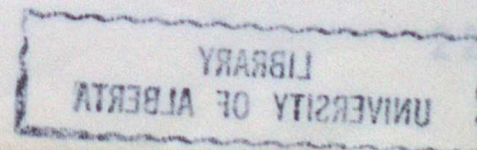
THE  
PHILOSOPHICAL  
VIEWS  
OF  
MAO TSE-TUNG

A Critical Analysis

W. ALTAYSKY, V. GEORGIYEV  
KRYUKOV  
MAO TSE-TUNG  
The Revolutionaries

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## INTRODUCTION

## THE MAOIST MYSTIQUE

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One of the principal dangers of the Maoist mystique for the cause of socialism is the fact that the Maoist pseudo-philosophy employs Marxist-Leninist terminology and even claims to be "The Peak of Marxism-Leninism." Maoism's masquerade as Marxist philosophy is facilitated by the fact that it emerged as an independent ideological current out of Marxist practice living as a parasite off the economic, theoretical, social, and political problems faced by a Marxist party in the very special conditions that obtained in China. By masquerading in Marxist disguise, Maoist philosophy deceives and ideologically disarms the masses in China and those revolutionaries in other countries who are not well versed in revolutionary theory and attempt to study

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## INTRODUCTION

### THE MAOIST MYSTIQUE

The twentieth century is characterised by the great achievements of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in the revolutionary transformation of society, and tremendous advances in science, the taming of nature and the conquest of space. Nevertheless, even in this day and age, myths and mystiques can and do make their appearance for various reasons in social life, science and ideology.

One of the most baffling mystiques of our time is undoubtedly the cult of the Mao Tse-tung personality and Maoism. Just as in the Middle Ages philosophy was placed in the service of theology, so in present-day China philosophy, as part of "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung", is made to serve the cult of Mao Tse-tung and the military-bureaucratic dictatorship he has established. Although this is a relatively recent development, Mao Tse-tung has long regarded "philosophy" as a means of justifying and providing a theoretical basis for various forms of "practice".

One of the principal dangers of the Maoist mystique for the cause of socialism is the fact that the Maoist pseudo-philosophy employs Marxist-Leninist terminology and even claims to be "The Peak of Marxism-Leninism". Maoism's masquerade as Marxist philosophy is facilitated by the fact that it emerged as an independent ideological current out of Marxist practice living as a parasite off the complex theoretical, social, and political problems faced by a Marxist party in the very special conditions that obtained in China.

By parading in Marxist disguise, Maoist philosophy disorients and ideologically disarms the masses in China and those revolutionaries in other countries who are not well versed in revolutionary theory and attempt to study



the experience of the Chinese revolution without having first mastered the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism.

Maoism not only discredits Marxist philosophy, presenting it in a highly primitive, grotesque form, but temporarily hinders wide sections of the working masses in China and other countries from understanding genuine international Marxist-Leninist doctrine and its philosophy.

Although eclectic in its composition and founded on subjective-idealist principles, Maoist philosophy holds up a screen of militant materialism and wages a fierce struggle against Marxist philosophy, declaring it to be "revisionist", "metaphysical" and so on.

Mao's followers present his philosophy as "contemporary Marxism-Leninism". Mao's most loyal comrade-in-arms and disciple Lin Piao appraises Mao's "contribution" to Marxist-Leninist theory as follows: "Comrade Mao Tse-tung is the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our time. Brilliantly, creatively and all-embracingly, he has inherited, upheld and developed Marxism-Leninism, and raised it to a new stage."

So much for Mao Tse-tung's "contribution". Let us now take a look at what Lin Piao has to say of Maoism, dubbed "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung". "The thoughts of Mao Tse-tung are the Marxism-Leninism of the age of the universal collapse of imperialism and the triumph of socialism throughout the world." Further on we would learn many more curious things about the fabrication of myths in our time. According to Lin Piao, the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung are "a powerful ideological weapon against imperialism, revisionism, and dogmatism", and "serve the whole Party, the whole of the army and the whole country as a guideline in any work".<sup>1</sup>

The above statements by Lin Piao express in a frank, peremptory manner the claims of the Maoists to hegemony and their intention to continue masquerading as Marxists. If we are to believe the Peking publishers (which is unfortunately not always possible, even as regards the dating of Mao Tse-tung's works, as we shall see later), these lines were written by Lin Piao on December 16, 1966.

However, we should be greatly overestimating the modesty of Mao Tse-tung and his supporters if we assumed

<sup>1</sup> *Quotations from Mao Tse-tung's Works* (in Russian), Peking, 1966, p. 1.

that such statements only began to appear in December 1966. Indeed, if this were the case, Lin Piao might well have found himself under heavy fire during the "cultural revolution" and shared the fate of those honest Chinese Communists who were slandered, included in the "black gang", and submitted to various forms of repressions up to and including physical annihilation.

The fact is that in his introduction to the *Quotations from Chairman Mao* published by the General Political Department of the People's Liberation Army on the instance and with the active participation of Lin Piao himself, he was merely repeating statements he had made at an enlarged meeting of the Military Committee of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in November and December 1960. However, they were only made public as the words of Lin Piao in 1966, on the eve of the "cultural revolution".

There are important reasons for the long interval between the time this formula was "invented" (1960) and its publication signed not by some obscure author of a history book or article but by Lin Piao himself.

The main reason is that the ambitious strivings of Mao Tse-tung to definitively substitute an eclectic hotch-potch called "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung" for genuine Marxism-Leninism met with stiff resistance within the Chinese Communist Party, not to mention the fact that the Maoist claims to hegemony were rejected outright by the fraternal parties and the communist movement as a whole. Even the Albanian leaders, although eulogising Mao and harping on the significance of his "contribution" to Marxism-Leninism, refrain in their official statements from declaring "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung" "contemporary Marxism-Leninism of the highest level".

Mao's pretentious claims to be "the greatest Marxist-Leninist of the age" have also caused acute embarrassment to several leaders of pro-Maoist renegade groups. Thus, even such a devoted admirer of the "greatness" of Mao Tse-tung as the Australian E. P. Hill was reported in the press to have advised the Peking leaders in the spring of 1968 to curb the zeal of the Hungweipings abroad, since their habit of thrusting the little red books of quotations and badges of Mao on people was having the opposite of the desired effect



and making the "great teacher" and his "disciples" the object of general ridicule.

Although the doubts of his "close allies" abroad sting the swollen pride of Mao Tse-tung, he is soothed by long-winded daily reports from the Hsinhua Agency that "95 per cent of the revolutionary peoples of the world love Chairman Mao" and that there are even tribes living in the jungles of Africa "willing to go through fire in order to receive a badge of Chairman Mao". But the trouble for the Maoists is that many members of the Chinese Communist Party, and especially those who took part in the revolution and are familiar with Marxism, have grave doubts about the views and actions of Mao Tse-tung. During the "cultural revolution" it became known that many leading Party officials were, as Chiang Ching<sup>1</sup> put it, "fiercely opposing the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung".

In 1967, the Group for Cultural Revolution Affairs (Chen Po-ta, Chiang Ching, Kang Cheng) gave the Hungweipings access to the Central Committee Archives, and statements against "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung" made by Liu Shao-chi, Chu Teh, Teng Hsiao-p'ing, Peng Teh-huai, Chen Yun, Ho Lung, Tan Chen-lin and many others were collected from the minutes and shorthand records of the proceedings of the rarely called plenums of the Central Committee of the CPC, meetings of the Politburo and various closed working meetings held by the Secretariat of the Central Committee.

In February, 1967, a book was published in Peking by the Hungweipings entitled "A Hundred Statements of Liu Shao-chi Against the Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung". Its contents were reprinted in numerous Hungweiping and Tsao-fan publications that circulated semi-officially, and also by a number of special magazines published by official bodies, such as *Nun-ye chi-chi* (Agricultural Machinery). Similar collections of "statements against the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung" by many other prominent Party officials were prepared and published in Peking during 1967 and 1968.

<sup>1</sup> Chiang Ching, Mao's fourth wife. A film actress in the thirties; from 1966, during the "cultural revolution", she rose to a prominent position in the Peking hierarchy, and together with Kang Cheng occupied the most extreme Maoist positions.

In order to give the reader some idea of the contents of this work and the fine language in which it is couched, we have thought it worthwhile quoting a few passages in full. We ask the reader to bear with us, in the belief that his patience will be rewarded with a fuller understanding of the essence of the Maoist mystique and its clear departure from Marxism-Leninism.

The first short passage comes from the compilers' preface. "The reactionary revisionist statements of Liu Shao-chi are directly opposed to the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung. In order to show the revisionist snout of Liu Shao-chi we have chosen a hundred examples from among the revisionist statements of Liu Shao-chi."

The part entitled "Liu Shao-chi Belittles the Great Significance of the Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung" contains such "criminal", "black revisionist statements" as the following. "*Marxism is essentially the richest teaching in the whole history of the world; any major problems of principle can be solved with its aid.*" "Many problems were solved long ago by Lenin, but as we had not read *Two Tactics*<sup>1</sup> the triumph of the Chinese revolution was held up for twenty years. If the whole Party had studied *Two Tactics* in the twenties it would have been possible to prevent the defeat of the revolution in 1927."

In 1962, Liu Shao-chi had published an edited version of his book *On the Self-cultivation of Communist Party Members*, written by him in 1939 in Yen-an, and essentially directed against Lin Piao's appraisal of Mao's "contribution" and the significance of his "ideas". The book contains a part entitled "Being Worthy Disciples of Marx and Engels". These words absolutely infuriated the Maoists, who screamed: "Did not the closest comrade-in-arms Lin Piao say: Chairman Mao is far higher than Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. There is nobody in the world now who could compare with Chairman Mao and surpass him."

The following statement by Liu Shao-chi in his hitherto unpublished "Reply to Sung Liang" threw the Hungweipings and the Maoists into even greater rage, since they regard it as casting doubt on the theoretical significance of the works of Mao Tse-tung.

<sup>1</sup> Liu Shao-chi is referring to Lenin's *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*.



*"The Communist Party of China has ... one great weakness. This weakness consists in the fact that with regard to ideology and in the sphere of theoretical education the Party is insufficiently prepared and relatively immature.... So far no great works have appeared, and in this respect our Party still has a tremendous task ahead of it."*<sup>1</sup>

In 1964, at the height of the campaign for the study of "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung", a campaign launched on the instance of Mao himself and Lin Piao, Liu Shao-chi declared in a letter: "There are many people in the Party now who are making a dogma of the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung."

In the aforementioned work of Liu Shao-chi *On the Self-cultivation of Communist Party Members* the Maoists discovered the following highly seditious passage, which was apparently directed against the cult of the personality of Mao Tse-tung. According to the collection, he "... imagined himself the Chinese Marx and the Chinese Lenin and considered himself to be Marx and Lenin in the Party. Moreover, he had no scruples about demanding that the members of our Party accord him the same respect as Marx and Lenin, support him as the 'leader' and nourish loyalty and love for him.... But can we say with complete certainty that no other such elements will appear in our Party? No we cannot yet maintain this."

In order to get the facts in their true historical perspective, we must say a few words about the role of Liu Shao-chi in the creation of the Mao personality cult and the propagation of "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung". Liu Shao-chi admitted this himself in a statement made in 1959. "Hitherto I have been creating the cult of personality of Chairman Mao, but I am no longer doing so."

Indeed, until the late forties Liu Shao-chi took an active part in the creation of the cult of personality of Mao Tse-tung and exalted his ideas. It was he who at the CPC's Seventh Congress in 1945 defended and justified Mao's thesis of the sinification of Marxism. However, it must be said that under the influence of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and the struggle between two trends within the

<sup>1</sup> The cuts were made by the compilers. The emphasis was added by the present authors.—M.A., U.G.

CPC leadership—the internationalist and the nationalist—he was among the many prominent Party officials who proposed at the Eighth Congress that the formula "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung are the guiding ideology of the CPC" be changed. The final text read: "The Communist Party of China is guided in all its activities by Marxism-Leninism."

In the course of the notorious "cultural revolution", Mao Tse-tung hypocritically dubbed Liu Shao-chi's work "revisionist". Naturally it was not really a question of revisionism, but simply that the article set forth Lenin's basic ideas on ideological and organisational work to build up a Marxist party.

An edited version of the pamphlet defended the decisions of the Eighth Congress of the CPC on questions of building up the Party. It stressed the importance of ideological training of Party members in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, and refusal to tolerate nationalism, chauvinism and cult of personality, explained the need for the Party to adhere to a proletarian class policy and observe the principles of internal Party democracy, the need for international solidarity with the fraternal parties, and pointed out the international significance of the experience of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries.

It was these propositions and not the references to Confucius and Mencius—whom Mao himself is far more apt to quote than Liu Shao-chi—that so upset the Maoists.

The point was that the dissemination of these principles by Liu Shao-chi was creating an obstacle to the attempts of Mao and company to transform the Party into an instrument of the absolutist military dictatorship of Mao Tse-tung.

Many other leading Party members criticised Mao's views to some extent, either openly or in a veiled manner. Peng Teh-huai referred to "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung" as primitive and metaphysical. The famous Chinese Marxist philosopher Yang San-chen criticised Mao's philosophical works for their vulgar approach to materialism and "Machist subjectivism". Several senior Party officials remarked that Mao's speeches were full of "truisms" and "verbiage".

It is worth remembering in this connection that in the twenties and thirties Mao had been criticised by Chu Chiu-po, Wang Ming, Po Gu and others for "not understanding



Marxism", the "narrow empiricism" of his views, and his "inclination for military adventurism", and so on.

In 1961, the Propaganda Department of the CPC Central Committee reported on the results of the propaganda campaign that had been launched on orders from Mao himself and on the suggestion of Lin Piao following the appearance of Volume Four of *Selected Works* of Mao Tse-tung in September 1960. As against Lin Piao's claim that "the campaign for the study of the ideas of Mao Tse-tung had armed the workers, peasants and soldiers with a spiritual atom bomb", the Propaganda Department concluded that the campaign was nothing more than "oversimplification" and "vulgarisation" and "typical pragmatism".

In response to Mao's demands that his "thoughts" should be made the basis of theoretical instruction for all Party cadres, and the works of Marx and Lenin be relegated to the role of illustrating and supplementing them, a senior Party official commented: "If in the study of theory we are to take the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung as the basis and study Marx's *Capital*, how can we speak of the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung as the basis? And did not Lenin say everything there was to say about imperialism, and are any additions necessary? There is no comparing the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung with Marxism-Leninism."

Hungweiping publications reported that the famous Chinese revolutionary Yang Shan-kun, once a candidate for election to the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee, also protested against the forced propagation of "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung". During an inspection of the way Party work was being carried on in the province of Shansi, Yang Shan-kun met with cases of illiterate or semi-literate people being forced to learn "the thoughts of Mao". "This drew a burst of indignation from Yang Shan-kun," the Hungweipings wrote. "He made the slanderous claim that the study of the works of Chairman Mao was an instance of 'social coercion', 'formalism', 'vulgarisation', 'profanation'.... He declared: 'I do not believe that one can solve a question by reading some work by Chairman Mao.'" Further on they write: "He even went as far as to say that 'the theoretical level is not high' in the Chairman's works, and that they are only to be studied 'to widen one's outlook and for gaining a very general picture'." In conclusion the

Hungweipings quote the following scathingly ironic words of Yang Shan-kun. "Here a triumph of the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung, there a triumph of the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung. If someone wins at table tennis it is hailed as a triumph of his thoughts. But what if they lose?"

However, the opposition of the more sober-minded members of the CPC to the efforts to substitute the notorious "thoughts of Mao Tse-tung" for real Marxism-Leninism merely caused the Maoists to adopt more roundabout tactics and proceed with the propagation of Maoism via the already purged army apparatus, by-passing the Central Committee.

Mao and his followers embarked on an unprecedented campaign and the cultivation of Mao and his thoughts assumed the scale of a nation-wide psychosis. One myth automatically gave birth to another, as this is the only way a myth can survive. The result was a whole string of myths based on gross distortion of the history of the CPC, the Chinese revolution and the spread of Marxist-Leninist ideas in China. As we have seen, these fabrications centre round the myth of Mao Tse-tung as the "great leader", founder of the CPC, father of "Chinese communism", and even the claim that he has created an integrated philosophical system.

The serious opinions of Chinese Communists, even those that were not directed against "the thoughts of Mao" as such, but merely intended to keep the glorification of Maoism within the bounds of reason, were ignored. As if in deliberate defiance, the Maoists began to connect everything under the sun with the "triumph of the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung", from the sale of water melons to improvements in hairdressing, from surgical operations to the operations of the night soil department. A deliberate movement was under way to deify Mao and give his "thoughts" the status of a Holy Writ. Maoism was gradually becoming a kind of religion.

The aim was to mesmerise a nation of seven hundred million souls with the "thoughts of Mao" and turn them all into unthinking robots, "obedient buffaloes", "stainless screws", in contrast to Marxism-Leninism, where the aim is to develop the creative abilities of the people as a whole and of every individual, giving him a creative role in shaping his own destiny, and making him responsible for the cause of the whole people and the whole Party.



The official Chinese historiographers assert that throughout the history of the Communist Party of China Mao Tse-tung adhered to the singularly true, Marxist views, while all the other Party leaders made either Right- or "Left"-opportunistic mistakes. To prove the fact that he was a "faultless wiseacre", they falsify many of the facts from the history of the CPC. Moreover, they ascribe many of Mao's mistakes to other Party leaders, including Chu Chiu-po, Wang Ming and Liu Shao-chi.<sup>1</sup>

Before we examine Maoist "philosophical doctrine", two more aspects of the Maoist mystique must be exposed for what they really are: "sinified Marxism" and the philosophical works of Mao Tse-tung.

Mao Tse-tung and his group regard the creation of an aureole around Mao (the "greatest Marxist-Leninist of our age") and the glorification of his so-called "thoughts" ("living Marxism-Leninism of the contemporary age") as a major condition for the establishment of Chinese political hegemony in the world. The Peking leaders' hegemonic ambitions are patently evident. At a meeting in honour of Lu Hsin, a representative of the Hungweipings declared: "We young red soldiers of Chairman Mao...will make the sky Mao Tse-tung's sky, the earth Mao Tse-tung's earth, and man a man armed with the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung. We shall hoist over the whole world the great red banner of the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung."

Let us pause here for a moment to glance back at the earlier development of the "thoughts of Mao Tse-tung". If we turn to the history of the CPC and examine Mao's past activities, we can immediately see how at every stage of his political career, even back in the days when he was actually making an effort to study Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung had an extremely poor, one-sided grasp of the doctrine. It was not simply that he lacked a proper academic knowledge of all the works of the classics of Marxism-Leninism; more important was the fact that his petty-bourgeois background made him perceive the proletarian doctrine through the prism of Confucianism, nationalism and Sinocentrism.

<sup>1</sup> The same trend is to be seen in joint articles published by *Hungchi*, *Jen-min jih-pao*, and *Jiefangjun pao* and devoted to the centennial of the Paris Commune and the 50th anniversary of the Communist Party of China celebrated in March and June 1971.

In a speech made at the Ninth Congress of the CPC, Lin Piao declared that for fifty years (i.e. from 1919) Mao Tse-tung had united the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution. In the light of available historical facts, however, Lin Piao's claim proves to be totally unfounded. In his very earliest works Mao Tse-tung was already expounding non-Marxist ideas. Thus, in *A Study of Physical Education*, his first work, written in 1917 at the age of twenty-four, he regards the physical fitness of the nation as a means of achieving the national rebirth of China. In his second work, the article "The Great Union of the Popular Masses" (1919), we find no reference to the idea of working-class leadership in the revolution and no mention at all of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Mao's weak grasp of Marxism, his primitive, vulgarised, and distorted understanding of Marxist theory is particularly in evidence in his political writings of 1926 to 1930. In his articles of this period Mao divided society into classes according to the income of the various groups of the population. He drew no distinction whatsoever between China's backward, semi-feudal society and a developed bourgeois society. In his article "Analysis of All the Classes in Chinese Society" (1926)<sup>1</sup> he divided Chinese society into five classes: big capitalists, the middle capitalists, small capitalists, semi-proletariat and proletariat. Militarist feudal lords, landowners, state bureaucrats and others were all lumped together as big capitalists. According to Mao's reckoning there were over 155 million capitalists in China! The semi-proletariat class, who according to Mao numbered over 200 million, included semi-independent farmers, tenant farmers, the very poor peasantry, artisans, petty traders and others.

This analysis of the class structure of Chinese society shows that Mao really adopts a petty-bourgeois Leftist standpoint, but includes the petty-bourgeois layers in the proletariat or semi-proletariat in order to hide the fact and make his views appear to be proletarian. Mao's analysis of the Chinese proletariat is very telling in this connection. He exaggerated their number by more than twenty times, nam-

<sup>1</sup> Our references to this article are to the original version and not the one that was specially written in the fifties for inclusion in *Selected Works*.



ing the figure of 45 million, at a time when they could hardly have numbered two million at the outside.

In the same article Mao expresses his opinion on the major forces of revolution in China. Mao holds that the poorest class is the most revolutionary. He thus considered the petty traders to be the main revolutionary force at the time of writing, followed by the students, urban petty-bourgeois layers, and only then the workers.

Progressively distorting Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung came to regard the peasantry as the most revolutionary class, the class which should take power in the course of the revolution. After the Chinese labour movement had been crushed in the thirties, Mao Tse-tung completely ignored the working class as the leading revolutionary force.

In 1939 and 1940 Mao published "The Chinese revolution and the Communist Party of China" and "On New Democracy" in which he grossly distorted the principles of proletarian internationalism. In these works Mao reviews the Marxist doctrine of the leading role of the working class with reference to the Chinese revolution, paving the way for revision of a basic tenet of Marxism, that concerning the universal-historical mission of the working class. Starting with the idea that the peasants are "the main force in the Chinese revolution" Mao concludes that the main support for the revolution would be found in the countryside and that the correct revolutionary strategy was the encirclement of the towns from the countryside.<sup>1</sup>

Mao persisted in this one-sided view, declaring that "...the Chinese revolution is virtually the peasants' revolution..."<sup>2</sup>, and "new-democratic politics is virtually the granting of power to the peasants".<sup>3</sup>

As soon as he assumed leadership of the Party in 1935, Mao Tse-tung set out to replace Marxism-Leninism with a kind of "sinified Marxism", and later Maoism. Indeed, Mao put forward his idea for the sinification of Marxism as early as 1938, at the Plenum of the Party Central Committee. During the 'rectification' movement for the ideological remoulding of the Chinese Communist Party, the substitution of Maoism for Marxism-Leninism became more or less of-

ficial policy. In April, 1945, at the Seventh Plenum of the Central Committee, a falsified version of the history of the Chinese Communist Party was approved which in direct violation of historical fact presented Mao as the founder of the Party and associated all its victories with his name.

At the Seventh Plenum nationalistic elements gained the upper hand. The "thoughts of Mao Tse-tung" were declared to be "the Party's guiding ideology", and Mao made his first bid to become the ideological mentor of revolutionaries throughout Asia. In 1949, Mao gave the order for Maoism to be propagated everywhere, and made the far from modest claim that "five to seven years after the triumph of the Chinese revolution everyone will accept Maoism, even the Russians".

Substituting his own theories for true Marxism-Leninism, theories that represented, on the one hand, petty-bourgeois illusions about socialism, the "guerrilla habit", populism and neo-Trotskyism and, on the other hand, a reiteration of a few general Marxist theses, Mao Tse-tung posed as a militant opponent of doctrinairism and subjectivism and champion of the purity of Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

In point of fact, however, Mao was already rejecting Leninism. In this period (1938-1945) a marked revision of Marxism-Leninism was evident in his statements, expressed in his refusal to recognise the leading role of the proletariat in the revolution and exaggeration of the revolutionary nature of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. This was accompanied by a growing tendency to maximise the national features of the Chinese revolution, and contrast it with the Russian Revolution of 1917. At the Plenum held in March 1949, Mao declared: "Leninism is useless for China. China will follow the road of Maoism and not Leninism."

In the early years of the Chinese People's Republic the propagation of the "thoughts of Mao Tse-tung" was checked by internationalist opposition in the Party. At the Eighth Congress of the CPC, a directive about the "thoughts of Mao Tse-tung" was removed from the Party Rules.

Meanwhile, however, work was in progress to boost Mao's status as "greatest theoretician" and "leader of the revolutionary peoples". At the beginning of the fifties, the *Selected Works* of Mao were published in China. The works had been carefully pruned for publication, trimmed of all

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Works*, Volume Three, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.



the most clearly nationalist and anti-Marxist statements. The publishers even took care to "cover up their tracks". An order went out that all newspapers of the Yenan period containing articles included in the new "edition" were to be withdrawn, and new copies were put out with the appropriate alterations.

In order to build up Mao Tse-tung's reputation among the Chinese people as the "greatest Marxist-Leninist", the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin have been to all intents and purposes proscribed for study by Communists.

From 1951, the ministers of the cult of Mao have been doing their utmost to create an image of their leader as a highly original thinker and philosopher, to represent the "thoughts of Mao Tse-tung" as the theoretical and ideological basis underlying the emergence of the CPC and the entire development of the Chinese revolution. The idea that Mao was already an accomplished Marxist theoretician and a "great philosopher" back in the mid-thirties occupies an important place in this legend. Peking claims that in 1935 Marxism entered the third stage of its development, the stage of "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung".

On March 6, 1968, the Hsinhua Agency informed the world that "Mao Tse-tung is the greatest teacher, the most outstanding commander-in-chief and the wisest helmsman of the Chinese people and the revolutionary peoples of the world".

"Chairman Mao is the greatest genius in the world, to whom none can compare. ... He has brilliantly, creatively and all-embracingly inherited, defended and developed Marxism-Leninism, and raised it to the third great level of its development, to a completely new stage—the stage of the Thought of Mao Tse-tung. And the world has entered a new revolutionary age, whose great banner is provided by the Thought of Mao Tse-tung."

Mao's closest follower, the Minister of Defence Lin Biao, went even further. "A genius like Chairman Mao only appears once in several centuries in the world and once in several thousand years in China. He is the greatest genius of all and in all things."

In *The Three Great Stages in the History of Marxism*, a collection of material published in Peking after the Eleventh Plenum of the CPC Central Committee (held in Au-

gust, 1966), the Maoists "hailed" the world's entry "into the new age of the Thought of Mao Tse-tung". According to this new Peking version, the history of the development of Marxism falls into three stages. The first is the Marxist stage proper, lasting from the appearance of *The Manifesto* of the Communist Party in 1848 to the "transformation" of Marxism into its opposite, Bernsteinian revisionism, in 1898.

The second stage, the stage of Marxism-Leninism, begins, according to the clever calculations of the Peking "theoreticians"—with the appearance of Leninism. This period begins with Lenin's attack on Bernsteinism in 1898, and ends in 1935, the year in which the Maoists claim Marxism-Leninism began to mark time in the Soviet Union, Mao Tse-tung became "leader" of the CPC and "the centre of the world revolution moved from the Soviet Union to China".

The third stage began in 1935 and is still with us. In 1935, taking advantage of the difficult situation that had arisen in the revolutionary movement in China (schism in the Central Committee leadership), Mao Tse-tung, with the aid of loyal army units had the CPC leaders arrested at a meeting in Tsunyi (January, 1935). According to the Maoists, "the thoughts of Mao" are "the newest Marxism of the age when imperialism is heading for complete collapse and socialism is on the way to victory throughout the world". It was not far from this to the announcement at the Ninth Congress of the CPC (April, 1969) that Mao Tse-tung "has inherited, upheld and developed Marxism-Leninism, and raised it to a completely new stage".

The aforementioned book categorically affirms that Mao Tse-tung's articles "On Practice" and "On Contradiction", purporting to have been written in 1937, and Mao's later works "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" (1957) and "Whence Does a Man Acquire Correct Ideas?" (1963) "are the most all-embracing, perfect and systematised of all the works of Marxist-Leninist philosophy".

The above tirade of quotations from the works of the leaders of the "cultural revolution" indicate an extremely low cultural level not to mention philosophical ignorance. But it must be borne in mind that the history of the spread of Marxism-Leninism in China is not widely known, and that Maoism, by building a wall round China and isolating



the Chinese people ideologically and culturally from the peoples of the other socialist countries, has filled a spiritual and ideological vacuum of its own creation. This being so, however primitive the philosophy of Maoism may seem, and however absurd its self-evaluation, all these things must be taken perfectly seriously and confronted with hard facts that show Maoist conceit to be unfounded and destroy the thick web of myth and falsehood.

Let us pause then to consider three questions. First, how did Mao himself formerly assess the theoretical level of the CPC? Second, how were Mao Tse-tung's theoretical works assessed in the CPC, and when did "On Practice" and "On Contradiction" in fact appear? Third, what relation do the philosophical exercises of Mao Tse-tung bear to the philosophical traditions of Marxism?

For years now, the Peking propaganda machine has been maintaining that the Chinese revolution developed "under the guidance of the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung". The Revolutionary War Museum in Peking contains exhibits showing how the soldiers of the Chinese People's Army were studying "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung" as early as 1928. Thus, it is implied that by the early thirties Mao had already written works "which contained theoretical generalisations on the experience of the Chinese revolution". This claim arouses serious objections. Insofar as the experience of the Chinese revolution was generalised at all, it was done by the Chinese internationalist Communists with considerable help from the Comintern and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Without trying to belittle the contribution of the Chinese Communists, it should nevertheless be pointed out that the most important conclusions are to be found in the works of Lenin, in the decisions of the Comintern congresses and ECCI (Executive Committee of the Communist International) plenums and in the documents of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for the years 1926 to 1928. They designate the major forces at work, the character of the Chinese revolution and the importance of an alliance between the workers and the peasantry, the problems the Party faced in applying Marxism-Leninism in a semi-colonial, semi-feudal, peasant country, such as China was at that time.

It was the Comintern and the CPSU that helped the young

Chinese Communist Party gain a proper theoretical understanding of the first stages of the Chinese revolution, and evolve a suitable strategy and tactics of struggle. The fact that the Chinese revolution suffered reverses at certain stages is explained above all by the inexperience of the CPC leadership in mobilising and uniting the working masses of town and country, and frequent Left-sectarian and Right-opportunist mistakes.

An important contribution to the spread of Marxism-Leninism in China and the study of the peculiarities of the Chinese revolution was made by such prominent members of the CPC as Li Ta-chao, Peng Pai, Teng Chung-hsia, Chu Chiu-po and Ts'ai Ho-shen, but they soon fell victims to the Kuomintang butchers. Later Mao Tse-tung helped himself to many ideas from Comintern documents and the writings of the Chinese internationalists, without acknowledgement, reinterpreted them to suit himself and presented them as his own.

One of the outstanding leaders of the CPC in the thirties, Wang Ming, who was his Party's representative in the Comintern and made an important contribution to the elaboration of strategical and tactical questions for a united front of the CPC and the Kuomintang, was discredited in the Party by Mao Tse-tung, who proceeded to ascribe his services to himself.

However, even at the beginning of the forties, if we discount a few works on individual problems, the CPC still had no important theoretical works of its own on the experience of the Chinese revolution, no thorough analysis of the social classes in China or of the trends of the country's economic and political development. Mao Tse-tung himself admitted as much in 1942, when he said: "Our practice with its rich variety still needs to be raised to its proper theoretical level. We have not yet examined all the problems, or rather the important ones relating to revolutionary practice, and raised them to the theoretical plane. Just think, how many of us have, on China's economics, politics, military affairs or culture, originated a theory worthy of the name, which can be considered scientific, comprehensive and not crude or sketchy?"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Four, p. 30.



Much later, in 1958, Mao Tse-tung again admitted the low theoretical level of the Party and its cadres, in a speech at the second session of the Eighth Congress of the CPC. But the solution Mao and his followers suggested for raising the theoretical level of the Party, which was to study (for the umpteenth time!) the same old articles of Mao Tse-tung, not only failed to raise the level of the Party in Marxist-Leninist theory, but, on the contrary, led theory off along a false and futile trail.

If, as Maoist "historiography" would have us believe, Mao Tse-tung had already produced a profound theoretical study of the problems of the Chinese revolution and the development of Marxist thought in the thirties, how is it that the Party cadres after repeated study of the "profound" works of Mao remained on the same low theoretical level and the theoretical activity of the Party remained as backward as ever? The answer to that one is no doubt that the Party leadership, and Mao himself, at one time made a far more sober appraisal of their activities in the field of theory than was later the case, and did not consider the mere reciting of elementary truths of the conventional wisdom to constitute a contribution to theory. But this was before Mao Tse-tung began to aspire to the role of "the greatest theoretician of Marxism-Leninism".

The myth of "the greatest theoretician" required the creation of a whole series of new myths about his works. Students of the emergence of "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung" are faced with a remarkable problem considering that the author is still alive—the problem of the authenticity of the texts they are dealing with.

The fact is that the writings of the period 1926 to 1945 included in the first three volumes of the *Selected Works* of Mao Tse-tung, published in 1951, had been so altered as to be sometimes hardly recognisable as the original works.

There would seem to be nothing wrong in the author of works that contain weaknesses and mistakes rewriting them a few decades later when life has brought these shortcomings to light. Generally speaking, this is indeed perfectly alright, provided the principle of historicism is strictly adhered to, provided it is admitted that the original works contained errors which have been eliminated in the new edition, and provided the corrections made correspond to

changes in the author's views. If, however, the later edition purports to be the original, we are dealing with falsification of history, serving to embroider on the true historical events and exalt Mao Tse-tung as an infallible genius. A study of the activities of Mao Tse-tung shows that he deliberately chose a "dual personality". While retaining his former, on the whole non-Marxist views, he has allowed his entourage to create a pro-Marxist hypostasis for his views.

This falsification enables the Maoists to draw the conclusion that appeared in the newspaper *Jiefangjun pao* and which is repeated day after day in China, namely that "The thoughts of Mao Tse-tung are consistent and have always been wise, great and correct".<sup>1</sup> It enables the priests of the Mao personality cult to present him as the "incarnation of truth".

The Chinese propaganda machine is trying to convince everybody that "... Mao Tse-tung is always, eternally right, Comrade Mao Tse-tung has taken possession of the truth, he is the incarnation of truth".<sup>2</sup>

We have already referred to the article "Analysis of All the Classes in Chinese Society", which Mao wrote in 1926. The article with the same title included in Volume One of *Selected Works* bears absolutely no resemblance to it, and is written in the spirit of popular Marxist literature. A detailed study of the question of the authenticity of Mao Tse-tung's articles dealing with the history of the Chinese revolution and guerrilla warfare lies outside the scope of the present work. Suffice it to say that research into the subject by specialists has shown that here, too, a tremendous gap exists between the originals and the versions incorporated in *Selected Works*.

Nevertheless, it is essential that we dwell for a short time on the question of the authenticity of two articles by Mao Tse-tung, "On Practice" and "On Contradiction".

According to the introduction by the CPC Central Committee commission for the publication of *Selected Works*, "On Practice" was written in July, 1937, and "On Contradiction" in August of the same year. Of "On Practice" the foreword states: "This article was written to expose from

<sup>1</sup> *Jiefangjun pao*, November 13, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> Hsi Tung, *Cohesion and Unity of the Party* (in Chinese), Shanghai, 1961, p. 125.



the viewpoint of Marxist theory of knowledge such subjectivist mistakes in the Party as doctrinairism and empiricism, especially doctrinairism."<sup>1</sup> A similar claim is made for the other article. It is also stated that the views developed in these works were expounded by Mao Tse-tung in lectures delivered in Yen-an.

Scholarly writings on the history of the Chinese revolution used to accept the Peking dating. However, the hypothesis is now being advanced with ever greater insistence from many quarters that these works belong to a later period and have simply been back-dated.

We are dealing with what must have originally been some extremely raw and immature material for lectures delivered by Mao Tse-tung at Yen-an.

The following facts suggest that the works did not exist at that time.

1. During the campaign for rectifying style of 1941 to 1945, the political aim of which was the physical liquidation or exclusion from Party work of all internationalist elements, above all those connected with the Comintern, the Party was "re-educated" on the basis of Mao Tse-tung's articles. The decision of the Central Committee of the CPC of July 1, 1941, on the ideological cultivation of Party cadres and the speeches of Kang Sheng included a long list of articles by Mao Tse-tung, Kang Sheng and other Party members which were recommended for study by all members of the CPC to help overcome "doctrinairism" and "empiricism". However, none of these lists include a single "philosophical" work by Mao Tse-tung, although the two articles in question, as we have seen, were especially written to condemn these "deviations".

2. No mention of these works is to be found in the Yen-an newspaper *Jiefang jih-pao*.

3. The articles do not figure in the *Selected Works* of Mao Tse-tung published in 1945 and 1947.

4. Various books on the CPC and Mao Tse-tung were published in connection with the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the CPC in 1951. The most important of these were the pamphlets "The Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung—the Union of Marxism-Leninism and the Chinese Revolution"

by Chen Po-ta and "Thirty Years of the Communist Party of China" by Hu Chiao-mu. Although both authors give a detailed account of the ideological struggle in the CPC and do their utmost to exalt Mao Tse-tung as a theoretician, curiously enough, neither makes any mention of "the great philosophical works of Mao Tse-tung".

It would be wrong, however, to deduce from all this that Mao Tse-tung did not write any philosophical works at all. He both wrote and spoke on the subject. But the fact was that neither he nor his associates took these philosophical exercises of his at all seriously at the time. Thus, in 1937, Mao delivered lectures on philosophy at Yen-an which were subsequently published in the Shanghai journal *Min-chu* in 1940 with the title "Dialectical Materialism". Later, a fuller text of these lectures was published without the author's name by the Ta-chung shu-tien firm in Talien. The year of publication is not indicated, but it was somewhere between 1945 and 1949.

It must be said that when Mao delivered his lectures in Yen-an he did not consider his material "The Peak" of philosophical thought, but on the contrary, had an extremely modest opinion of them and wrote that their main purpose was to explain the dialectic in simple terms for Party cadres. "The dialectic is considered difficult because there are no good books explaining it," he wrote. "Of the many books on the dialectic we have in China some are erroneous while in others it is badly or not very well expounded. This makes people fight shy of the dialectic. A good book should explain the dialectic in simple language, in terms of reference that are close and understandable to all. A book of this sort must definitely appear in the future. *This course of lectures of mine cannot be considered good either, since I myself have only just begun studying the dialectic and am not capable of writing a good book...*"<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Mao's claims to have made a contribution to the development of Marxist philosophy are totally unfounded. Even before we come to analyse the content of Mao Tse-tung's philosophical works, it is clear that the Maoists claim that a new stage in Marxist philosophy began in 1935 is purely a myth.

<sup>1</sup> *Dialectical Materialism* (in Chinese), Talien. p. 110 (emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.).

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume One, p. 282.



There is one more question we feel should be answered before we go any further. Readers who have no special knowledge of China may well be puzzled as to why the Maoists at the Ninth Congress of the CPC should have rejected the term Maoism in favour of the unwieldy "Mao Tse-tung's Thought".

In order to form any conclusions about the relation Maoism bears to Marxism, it is necessary to analyse the social and ideological roots of Mao's outlook, and examine Mao Tse-tung's ideological development and emergence as a "theoretician".

The substitution of Maoism for Marxism-Leninism was actually effected at the Ninth Congress of the CPC, although the fact was camouflaged with the formula "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung's Thought". This formula was designed to present the thoughts of Mao, in the words of Lin Piao, as "a completely new stage in the development of Marxism-Leninism". While expressing the interests and ideology of the petty-bourgeois nationalist trend in the CPC, Mao Tse-tung is forced to reckon with the tremendous authority of Marxism-Leninism in the revolutionary movement in the world as a whole and in China in particular. This is why he is at such pains to make use of the moral, political and scientific authority of the teaching of Marx, Engels and Lenin in his own interests.

On the other hand, Mao is apparently well aware that his ideological "inventions", which are confined to a relatively narrow, specific field of politics, philosophy and history, look very slight when compared to the all-embracing quality of Marxism-Leninism. Maoism in general suffers from an "inferiority complex", which makes Mao himself and his supporters try to back up all his "inventions" with references to the classics of Marxism-Leninism.

Another factor at work here is the Chinese way of thinking, which has been greatly influenced by Confucianism, involving an immense respect approaching reverence for tradition. This Chinese *traditionalism* means that any proposition, however novel, must somehow be derived from the "instructions of the great teacher", Confucius and his disciples. In the case of Mao, the great "source" has split into two: he has tried to find support for his ideas in the works of Confucius and Chinese traditions and at the same time

take refuge in quotations from the classics of Marxism-Leninism.

This helps explain why the Maoists continue to pose as Marxist-Leninists after having rejected Marxism-Leninism for Maoism back in the early sixties.

Having declared "Mao Tse-tung's Thought" the third stage in the development of Marxism-Leninism, the Peking leaders were naturally faced, as the next logical step, with the task of introducing a new "ism"—"Maoism" or "Mao Tse-tungism". This is indeed what the most consistent Maoists have repeatedly tried to do. Mao himself, however, has always opposed this, preferring that his doctrine be called "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung". Then at the Ninth Congress, in order to emphasise the special place these "thoughts" occupy as a doctrine at once original and a part of the Marxist tradition, the term "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung's Thought" was introduced.

Why was it that Mao Tse-tung and his entourage felt obliged to reject the terms "Maoism" or "Mao Tse-tungism" in favour of the curious combination "Mao Tse-tung's Thought"?

The reasons are as follows.

1. Mao Tse-tung still strives to back up his views with the authority of Marxism-Leninism and appear as an original interpreter and "developer" of the Marxist tradition. The expression "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung's Thought" emphasises this, and at the same time corresponds to the political aims of the struggle for hegemony in the revolutionary movement.

2. The terms "Maoism" and "Mao Tse-tungism" sound like foreign borrowings in Chinese. In Chinese, "ism" is rendered by a combination of characters pronounced "chu-yi" which came into use in the nineteenth century for the translation of foreign words ending in "ism". By rejecting "chu-yi," which means literally "my own doctrine" and replacing it with "ssu hsiang"—"thought, interpretation"—which is more familiar to the Chinese, Mao was at once stressing his originality as a theoretician and making a concession to the traditional Chinese xenophobia. The more so in that in traditional Chinese usage, the "ssu hsiang" implies "original thought" combined with continuity.

Thus, the term they have chosen enabled the Maoists to



screen themselves from criticism and allows them plenty of room for manoeuvre.

3. In choosing a convenient term, the Maoists were probably unable to entirely ignore the fact that back in 1955 the Central Committee of the CPC had forbidden the use of special terminology in referring to the views of Mao Tse-tung, insisting that they be regarded purely as the application of Marxism-Leninism in Chinese conditions. We have already seen how the Eighth Congress of the CPC (1956) re-examined the theses of the Seventh Congress (1945) that the "thoughts of Mao Tse-tung" were "sinified Marxism" and "Chinese communism", and made no reference in the documents to "the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung".

4. A further reason why the Maoists rejected the term "Maoism" is that as soon as the Marxist-Leninist parties grasped the true significance of the "special course" of the Mao Tse-tung group, they began to insist on its incompatibility with Marxism-Leninism and named it "Maoism" in order to make the distinction clear. Thus, even before the Maoists had prepared the way within the country and the Party for the introduction of the term "Mao chu-yi", Maoism, the Marxist-Leninists had already succeeded in their efforts to discredit it and make it synonymous with anti-Marxism, anti-Sovietism, chauvinism and hegemonic ambitions.

In view of this, the Maoists did not dare to introduce the term "Maoism" in the documents of the Ninth Congress, although the matter was discussed. Instead, they settled for the term "Mao Tse-tung's Thought".

After the Ninth Congress, the Mao worshippers tried another trick to emphasise the originality and unusual qualities of their leader. They changed the way the last two characters of his name are written. In Peking foreign language publications, his name now appears as TSETUNG instead of Tse-tung. The point is that when written together the characters acquire the reading "light of the East", the idea being to give his name a symbolic meaning. The trouble with the way they were written before was that they had the reading "bog east" which can mean "bog of the East", "boggy East" or "bogging-down East"—you can take your pick. It is easy to see why Peking should wish to avoid the implications this coincidence might suggest to many as a reflection on the activities of their leader.

## THE SOCIAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF MAO TSE-TUNG'S OUTLOOK

China was a feudal state for nigh on two thousand years. Capitalism did not really begin to develop there until the latter half of the nineteenth century, and could still not be said to predominate in Chinese society at the time of the Russian October Revolution of 1917. At the turn of the century China remained a semi-feudal country, socially and economically backward.

In speaking of feudalism in China it must be borne in mind that the system had its own peculiar features there. Chinese feudalism ensured not only the prevalence of natural economy, combining agriculture with domestic industry, but also excessive concentration of land in the hands of the landlords and its total expropriation from the peasants. The peasant was wholly dependent on the landowner, for he depended on his lease for his very livelihood, and he had far less rights or freedom than his European counterpart. This was due to the fact that the peasant was entirely dependent on the state as well as his landlord, for the latter was generally an official in the imperial service.

It was in the interests of this feudal bureaucracy to keep the peasantry under their constant control. To this end, not only political and economic coercion, but all the ideological institutions of the feudal state were employed. A tremendous role in the preservation of feudal production relations was played by Confucianism, which remained the most influential ideology in China for almost two thousand years. Confucianism, with its insistence on submission to the Emperor and the aristocracy and unfailing observance of the feudal code of law and morality was ideally suited to the purposes of the feudal aristocracy. The cornerstone of Con-



fucianism was unquestioning obedience to one's seniors in age and position, and of the whole nation to the Emperor.

Describing the situation in the society of Western Europe in medieval times as a result of the political dictatorship of the Church, Engels wrote: "Church dogmas were also political axioms, and Bible quotations had the validity of law in any court. . . . This domination of theology over the entire realm of intellectual activity was at the same time an inevitable consequence of the fact that the Church was the all-embracing synthesis of the most general sanction of the existing feudal domination."<sup>1</sup>

A roughly similar situation is to be observed in Chinese medieval feudal society. Thus we might say, paraphrasing Engels, that Confucian dogmas were also political axioms, and the verdict in any court was based on quotations from Confucius. Confucianism, as the all-pervading, official ideology stifled all creative endeavour among the masses and prevented the development of science and technology.

The persistence of feudal production relations and the general stagnation of Chinese society made China an easy prey for outside interference when it came and she was unable to withstand the combined onset of the imperialist powers—England, France, Germany, the United States, Japan, Russia and Italy. By the beginning of the present century, China was held in political and economic bondage by world imperialism. She was shorn of her vassal states, Burma, Annam, Korea, Nepal, Sikkim and others, lost the island of Taiwan which had always formed part of her territory, to Japan, and was carved up into various spheres of influence. Foreign concessions and settlements were established and foreigners acquired extra-territorial rights and control over the Chinese exchequer.

Although China's defeat at the hands of the imperialist powers and the resulting inflow of foreign capital accelerated the development of capitalist relations in town and countryside, Chinese society remained fundamentally unchanged. The result was merely an extra burden for the exploited masses, in that to the yoke of the Manchu and Chinese feudal lords the yoke of the foreign capitalists was added.

The Chinese social structure was determined by feudal

production relations. The peasantry still formed the largest class—three-quarters of the total population. The working class was still numerically small, and even in the twenties did not number more than about two million. The vast majority of these were unskilled workers who had only recently migrated from the land. Small enterprises predominated and vestiges of the guild-type organisation of the pre-capitalist period were still strong.

The special features of China's socio-economic development naturally meant that the revolutionary movement, when it got under way in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the present century, also had rather special features. One of these was that the aims of national and social emancipation went hand in hand, another that the peasant movement was widespread at a time when the labour movement was in its infancy and confined entirely to the major coastal cities. The labour movement and peasant revolts were only tenuously connected.

Political opposition to the ruling Manchu Ch'ing Dynasty came from three directions—the peasant-plebeian, the bourgeois-revolutionary and liberal, and the bourgeois-landowner. The largest outbreaks of peasant revolt were the T'ai P'ing rebellion (1850-1864) and the Boxer rebellion (1898-1901), the latter drawing some response from certain sections of the urban poor. The bourgeois-landowner opposition was represented by a group of reformers led by Kang Yu-wei and Liang Chi-chao, while the bourgeois-revolutionary opposition comprised bourgeois democrats under Sun Yat-sen.

Each of these branches of the opposition movement proposed its own solutions to social and national problems. The T'ai P'ing were for setting up a just social order based on the principle of making all its members equal in the sphere of production and consumption, i.e., were advocating a variety of "peasant communism". Sun Yat-sen's programme corresponded in many ways to that of the T'ai P'ing. It consisted of three basic national principles: "nationalism", or the demand that the foreign Manchu Dynasty should be overthrown and the rights of the Chinese—Han—nation restored; "people's power", or the setting up of a democratic republic, and "national welfare", or the demand for "equal rights to the land", i.e., the nationalisation of the land and

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany*, Moscow, 1969, p. 62.



the transfer of land rents to the state. The demands of the Right wing of the opposition movement were rather more moderate than those of the T'ai P'ing or Sun Yat-sen, and amounted to the transfer to constitutional monarchy, without jeopardising the political and economic interests of the Chinese bourgeoisie and the so-called "enlightened feudal lords" associated with capitalist elements in the towns.

None of these programmes were capable of providing a real solution to the problems deriving from China's historical development, and at best could only have furthered the transformation of China into a capitalist state. The T'ai P'ing idea of equal distribution of the land would have led to the abolition of the feudal estates, but it was combined with the utopian dream of uniting the peasants in militarised patriarchal communes based on the principles of "consumer communism". Sun Yat-sen's "three national principles", although progressive and genuinely democratic, showed that the great Chinese revolutionary democrat failed to grasp the class nature of social contradictions and the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal tasks of the revolution that had matured in the country, and reduced them to an essentially national conflict between the Chinese (Han) and the Manchurians. Sun Yat-sen's programme for agrarian reform, involving nationalisation and equal partitioning of the land, was described by Lenin as "subjective socialism", since it did not include the socialisation of the means of production and was thus objectively bound to lead to the development of capitalist relations.

Due to the alliance between the bourgeois-landlord camp and the feudal-militarist and compradore-bureaucrat reactionaries, the lack of political cohesion in the revolutionary-democratic wing of the national bourgeoisie, and especially its failure to unite with the peasantry, the revolution of 1911 failed to solve the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal tasks that faced the country. It must also be noted that in their struggle against the Manchurians for the national revival of China, many members of the various opposition groups counted on support from the imperialist powers, harbouring illusions about their long-term aims in China.

The year 1917 saw China still economically backward and politically dependent on the imperialist powers. The triumph of the October Revolution in Russia made many revolution-

aries and other progressives in China take a new look at the problems of the social and political emancipation of the Chinese people, and turn to the experience of the Bolshevik Party and Marxist theory. Mao wrote in 1949: "The Chinese were introduced to Marxism by the Russians. Before the October Revolution, the Chinese were not only unaware of Lenin and Stalin but did not even know of Marx or Engels. The salvoes of the October Revolution brought us Marxism-Leninism. *The October Revolution helped the advanced people of China and of the whole world to adopt a proletarian world outlook as an instrument for looking into a nation's future or for reconsidering one's own problems.* Follow the path of the Russians—this was the conclusion."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, even Mao Tse-tung was at one time prepared to admit that Chinese society was ignorant of, or at least not very familiar with, Marxism prior to 1917. Many Chinese participating in political life came to adopt Marxism *solely* under the influence of the Russian Revolution, and not as a natural result of their political activities.

*Indeed, Marxism only began to penetrate China after 1917.* This is not to say, of course, that the Chinese were previously unaware of the existence of Marxism. Several of Marx and Engels' works had already been translated into Chinese—Chapter One of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* and Engels' introduction, part of Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* and his *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*—while many articles on Marxism had appeared, including "Short Biographies of the German Revolutionary Socialists" by Sun Yat-sen's close associate Chu Chih-hsin which contained biographies of Marx, Engels and Lassale. However, all this merely served to give the Chinese a rather sketchy outline of scientific socialism. It was only after the October Revolution that advanced Chinese intellectuals began to acquire a proper knowledge of Marxism.

It must be realised, however, that many Chinese revolutionaries, including members of the Chinese Communist Party, had very hazy notions of Marxism, since they had

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *On People's Democratic Dictatorship*, Peking, 1950, pp. 7-8 (emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.).



often acquired their knowledge of it second-hand. The first translators and popularisers of Marxism were often people with basically bourgeois-democratic views, like Chu Chih-hsin, who in the above-mentioned article criticised several of Marx's theses from a petty-bourgeois standpoint. Moreover, many of those who claimed to be Marxists were merely opportunists using Marxist doctrine *as a means to an end*. Seeing the success with which Marxism was being applied in Russia and other countries, they regarded Marxist ideas as a means of national salvation, as a means of liberating China from external and internal oppression. Many of those who embraced Marxism at this period did so in the belief that this was the only ideology capable of recovering China's former might. Thus, many of those who called themselves Marxists in fact remained bourgeois nationalists or at most revolutionary democrats.

Furthermore, the span of time between the spread of Marxist ideas and the creation of a Communist Party was far shorter in China than in Europe. Whereas, in Lenin's words, "Russia achieved Marxism through the *agony* she experienced through half a century", the same cannot be said of China. Nor had the ground been prepared for the founding of the Chinese Communist Party by successes of the labour movement, as was the case in Russia, for example. On the contrary, the Chinese proletariat was still in its infancy and had not yet organised itself properly or developed a strong class consciousness. *Indeed, a labour movement as an independent political force was to all intents and purposes non-existent in China in the first two decades of the present century.*

Lenin insisted that socialist revolution is not merely a workers' revolution, but a revolution of all levels of society that are subject to capitalist exploitation, and that it comprises not only the revolutionary movement of the working class but also the mass struggle of the peasantry and other layers. "Whoever expects a 'pure' social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is... The socialist revolution in Europe *cannot be* anything other than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all and sundry oppressed and discontented elements. Inevitably, sections of the petty bourgeoisie and of the backward workers will par-

ticipate in it—without such participation, *mass* struggle is *impossible*, without it *no* revolution is possible—and just as inevitably will they bring into the revolution their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors. But *objectively* they will attack *capital*, and the class-conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat, expressing this objective truth of a variegated and discordant, motley and outwardly fragmented, mass struggle, will be able to unite and direct it, capture power, seize the banks, expropriate the trusts which all hate (though for different reasons!), and introduce other dictatorial measures which in their totality will amount to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of socialism, which, however, will by no means immediately 'purge' itself of petty-bourgeois slag."<sup>1</sup>

Although in this appraisal of the objective difficulties in the path of the working-class revolutionary movement Lenin had Europe in mind, his words are equally applicable to China, with appropriate additions. The Chinese workers and their Party had to conduct their activities from the very outset amid a boundless ocean of peasant farms and surrounded in the towns by a numerically strong petty bourgeoisie. The situation was aggravated by the weakness of the working class and its organisations, and the immaturity of the first working-class revolutionaries. In view of the widespread interest in Marxism among the petty bourgeoisie and bourgeois intellectuals after 1917, the working class was often unable to withstand the pressure of alien views on its ideology. As a result, the Chinese Communist Party, from its inception (1921), was joined not only by Marxists, but also by large numbers of bourgeois nationalists, revolutionary democrats, anarchists, supporters of peasant socialism and so on, who brought with them their prejudices, reactionary fantasies, weaknesses and errors.

Mao Tse-tung is certainly to be counted among these non-Marxists. Strongly influenced in his early days by Confucianism, he perceived Marxist theses through the prism of the Confucian outlook. Maoist philosophy derives from two sources: the traditional (Confucian) ideology, whose chief elements are feudal ethics and chauvinism, and various

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 356.



bourgeois doctrines, both Chinese and European. This explains why Mao Tse-tung's theoretical baggage is so remarkably lightweight.

Marxist philosophy is a revolutionary-critical generalisation of all previous philosophical thought. The direct predecessor and source of Marxist philosophy was German classical philosophy, represented first and foremost by Hegel and Feuerbach. Hegel's creation of the system of laws and categories of dialectics, and Feuerbach's materialist thesis that nature and man are the only objective realities and his insistence on practice as the criterion of truth were all major achievements for world philosophy and testify to the fact that at the time Marx and Engels began their theoretical work European philosophy had reached a high level of development. If we take a look at the Chinese philosophy of the same period we shall find that it presents a very different picture.

Due to a number of historical causes, and above all the persistence of the feudal mode of production (in spiritual life this was reflected in the prevalence of effete neo-Confucian scholasticism) theoretical thought in China in the mid-nineteenth century lagged far behind that of Europe. Whereas at the dawn of world civilisation Chinese philosophy had given examples of profound (for the time of course) penetration into the essence of human nature and relationships and interesting dialectical conceptions extending to a relatively wide range of problems, and whereas the names of Confucius, Lao Tzu, Hsün-Tzu, Chuang Tzu, Mo-tzu and Yang Chu have a right to a place alongside such Western philosophers of first rank as Heraclitus, Democritus, Plato and Aristotle, in the Middle Ages, and especially in modern times, the position is very different.

This is not to say that these later periods have been totally lacking in great thinkers. There were such brilliantly original minds and free-thinkers as Fan Chen (5th century) and Han Yu (8th-9th c.), the materialists Chow Tun-i (11th c.), Chang Tsai (12th c.), Wang Fu-ch'i (17th c.) and Tai Chen (18th c.), the original intuitive-idealist Wang Yang-ming (16th-17th c.) and the interesting social philosopher Huang Tsung-hsi (17th c.) and many others. However, in the development of Chinese philosophy as a whole we can note the following general tendencies. Firstly, a

somewhat narrow range of interest, confined mainly to ethics, treated largely in terms of man's duty and obligations to (feudal) society, and the subordination of personal freedom to the authority of the state. Secondly, a schematic, descriptive approach and an overwhelming tendency to turn to the past in explaining the phenomena of the external world. Thirdly, excessive preoccupation with traditional problems and excessive use of time-honoured terms.

The metaphysicism characteristic of European philosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although one-sided, nevertheless represented a step forward from the naive dialectics of the ancient Greeks. It stressed the need for detailed investigation of material objects and thorough analysis of their characteristics. Descartes and Spinoza, Leibnitz and La Mettrie, Holbach and Diderot heralded a new age in the history of world philosophy.

Chinese philosophy, on the other hand, never really went through a metaphysical stage. The primitive dialectics of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, while undergoing certain modifications, chiefly in the form of borrowings from the Buddhist dialectics, continued to hold sway over Chinese thought right up to the beginning of the present century.<sup>1</sup>

In the middle, and even the latter part of the nineteenth century, Chinese philosophers were often still chewing over what had been written and said not only by their immediate predecessors, but by those who had lived as much as two thousand years before them. They went on repeating ideas, on the basis of the traditional concepts of Yin, Yang, Tao, Tai Chi, etc. In 1893, Cheng Huan-ying, an ideologist of the emergent Chinese bourgeoisie, published a book entitled *Bold Talk in the Age of Florescence* (Sheng-shi wei-yan), in which he proposed a series of political reforms to promote the technical and economic modernisation of China.<sup>2</sup> In the "Tao Chi", the part where the author presented

<sup>1</sup> Some metaphysical ideas were advanced, but not in a systematic manner, as a philosophical method. This point was noted by participants in a discussion on the history of Chinese philosophy held in China in the fifties. See *Uoprosy filosofii* (Questions of Philosophy), 1957, No. 4, pp. 138-41).

<sup>2</sup> Mao Tse-tung read this book in his youth and it left a strong impression on him. See: E. Snow, *Red Star Over China*, N.Y., 1939, pp. 127, 129.



the philosophical substantiation of his book, he wrote: "In the *Yi Ching*,<sup>1</sup> in the part 'Hsi Tzu Chuan', it is written: 'That which has no form is called Tao; that which has form is called Chi. Tao appeared out of non-being; first it engendered original matter (Chi) which condensed to become Tai Chi. Then Tai Chi divided into Yin and Yang.'"<sup>2</sup>

The sky surrounded the earth, and the earth took a place in the sky; Yin comprised Yang, and Yang comprised Yin. This is why it is said that "the interaction of Yin and Yang is Tao". Hence "Two engendered three and three engendered all things." The things that exist in the world and their names, original matter and its laws are embraced (Tao). Since there exist odd and even numbers, just as the multiplication of even numbers by odd numbers produces a variety of different numbers, so the interaction of Yin and Yang together form the variety of all things. Thus, things arose out of original matter, or, in other words, concrete objects appear out of Tao".

This primitive system of naive dialectics based on old treatises (the author seeks confirmation of the truth of his conception in the relevant ideas of Lao Tzu and Confucius) was formulated in 1893, at a time when the law of conservation and transformation of energy, cell theory and Darwin's theory of evolution were already current in Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Although this and similar treatment of cosmological problems is of undoubted value in that it helps foster a materialist world view, it nonetheless represents gross oversimplification. With rare exceptions, Chinese philosophy between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries suffered

from serious weaknesses in the treatment of ontological and epistemological problems.<sup>4</sup>

Philosophy invariably develops under the influence of the natural sciences. This being so, it is easy to see how the advances in modern European philosophy must be largely ascribed to the great strides made by Western science in such fields as medicine, astronomy, biology, physiology, mathematics and mechanics. In China, on the other hand, in the period we are dealing with, the natural sciences can be said to have marked time and this was bound to have its reflection in the development of philosophy.

The great Chinese philosopher Tai Chen (1723-1777) provides a perfect illustration of this. Tai Chen was a fine scholar with an extensively ranging mind for his age, a mathematician and an astronomer. Yet it cannot be said that he possessed truly scientific knowledge in the natural sciences and he cannot be counted among the foremost scientists of his age. He took the old traditional concepts and theories at their face value, and was perfectly prepared to accept, for example, that the Sun and the Moon were made of fire and water, heat and moisture, and moved under the influence of Yin and Yang.

The chief obstacle to the progress in Chinese philosophy, as we have already indicated, was the official feudal ideology of neo-Confucianism. Confucius was a great thinker who examined many questions of major importance in his

<sup>1</sup> In view of this, Professor Chu Chien-chi's claim that Chinese (Confucian) philosophy exerted a considerable influence on European philosophy and thus on Marxism is curious, to say the least.

In an article of his that appeared in the Chinese philosophical journal *Chieh-hsüeh yan-chiu* in 1957, we find the following: "...Marxism—dialectical materialism—is, essentially, connected with European eighteenth-century philosophy, and European eighteenth-century philosophy is, essentially, connected with Chinese philosophy. This means that Chinese philosophy penetrated Europe, and directly influenced French materialist philosophy, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, German idealist dialectics. And it so happens that materialism and dialectics were important sources of the development of dialectical materialism by Marx and Engels. If these historical facts are true, it will be easy for us in future to understand the connection between Marxism and Chinese philosophy, we shall cease to be unfamiliar, as we were at one time, with dialectical materialism, and in general we shall find it far easier to understand Marxist philosophy." (*Chieh-hsüeh yan-chiu*, No. 4, 1957, p. 57). The publication of such articles can only be regarded as a manifestation of hidebound nationalism.

<sup>1</sup> *Yi Ching* (The Book of Changes), one of the earliest Chinese treatises dating from the seventh or sixth century B. C. "Hsi Tzu Chuan" is a supplement to it, containing a philosophical interpretation of the main text, written around the fourth century B.C.

<sup>2</sup> Tai Chi (Great Limit) means the initial stage and cause of the appearance and development of all things. The earliest known account is contained in the *Yi Ching*. Yin and Yang are two opposite principles in nature, whose interaction the ancient Chinese regarded as the explanation of all issue and change in the universe.

<sup>3</sup> Another eminent reformer, Kang Yu-wei bases his theory of the origin of the universe on the concepts of Yuan Chi and Chi, which are to be found in the works of Confucius.



teaching, such as the social predestination of man, the conditioning of his actions, the criteria for judging human behaviour, and the nature of the relationships between different social groups. But the answers he suggested were not such as to promote the historical development of Chinese society. Confucian doctrine was backward-looking, and primarily concerned with what he called a "golden age" in China's past. He justified and defended conservative views and outmoded traditions. According to Confucius, the traditions of the wise rulers of the past embodied "the will of heaven", and these traditions, which he called Li (ceremony, etiquette) should be preserved and revered.

Jen, meaning humaneity or perfect humanity was a central concept of the Confucian doctrine. It would be wrong to interpret this as sympathy, or love and respect for others. The term had carried clear class implications and had a strictly defined sphere of application. Only the rulers—noble men—possessed Jen. "A noble man may not have Jen, but it is impossible for the ordinary man to have Jen."<sup>1</sup> Since Li was the concrete embodiment of the categories of Jen, the call of Confucius and his disciples, especially Mencius, to follow the way of Jen, really boiled down to an appeal for obedience and strict conformity to the social hierarchy. The ideal of Confucius and his followers was that the father should be paternal, the son filial, the ruler should be lordly, and the official official. Every man should keep to his appointed station. The society organised according to these principles should consist of two categories of people, those who work with their "hearts", that is their minds, and rule, and those appointed by destiny to physical labour to feed those who rule.

One of the basic principles upon which the social order propagated by Confucianism was based was absolute submission to one's seniors in age or station. Confucius and his followers thus attached great importance to the concept of Hsiao, or filial piety, insisting that "those who honour their parents and respect their elders, rarely fail to obey their superiors".<sup>2</sup> Thus, Confucianism tried to make use of clan patriarchal traditions to educate people in the spirit of

<sup>1</sup> Lun-yü, "Hsian-wen", p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., "Hsiu-erh", p. 2.

dumb submission to their rulers. Confucius made frequent direct statements to this effect. "Simple people," he said, "should not reason on affairs of state." They must be "forced to follow the leaders, but they must not be allowed to be educated".<sup>1</sup> Constant submission and obedience to the ruler (the Son of Heaven), the rule that "the cobbler should stick to his last", such are the basic principles of Confucianism.

Although such ideas undoubtedly had a negative effect on the development of Chinese thought, for a long time their influence was limited by the fact that Taoism and Buddhism existed side by side with Confucianism as equally powerful factors. This state of affairs lasted down to the eleventh or the twelfth century when, largely due to the efforts of Chu Hsi, neo-Confucianism, representing a combination of Confucian ethics with certain Taoist and Buddhist tenets was instated as the official ideology of Chinese feudal society.

Neo-Confucianism established a monopoly over the spiritual life of the people, demanding strict observance of accepted ways of thinking and forms of behaviour. It comprised a system of canons and rules which had to be scrupulously observed and obeyed. It was taught as dogma in all educational establishments, where every pupil was required to learn by heart numerous sayings of Confucius and his disciples as interpreted by Chu Hsi. A purely mechanical knowledge of these sayings served as the basic entry requirement for scholars to the "civil service". This learning parrot-fashion of Confucian dogmas from generation to generation encouraged by the feudal rulers became a "national tradition". As a result of such "teaching" methods, every Chinese was to a certain extent Confucianist, not in the sense that he was familiar with Confucian ideas but simply in that he accepted the Confucian prescriptions as something perfectly natural and not to be argued with, as traditions inherited from his ancestors.

Neo-Confucian scholasticism was bound to exert an important influence on the subsequent development of Chinese philosophy. All that was expected of scholars was completely orthodox commentaries on the works of the great Confucianist sages, and any ideas contradicting neo-Con-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., "Tai-po", p. 9.



fucianism were severely criticised. This naturally prevented Chinese thinkers from adopting a creative approach to urgent problems of Chinese social and intellectual life. Even progressive Chinese philosophers and socio-political thinkers were forced to resort to the authority of Confucius in order to justify their ideas. Thus, the late nineteenth-century bourgeois reformers (Kang Yu-wei, Liang Chi-chao and others) employed theses from Confucius in propagating the idea of constitutional monarchy.

It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that European culture and philosophy began to filter into China. Since this process took place against the background of a feudal society, it naturally assumed a rather special character. Borrowings were mainly in the form of Western technical achievements, certain political and social institutions, and some ideas from European bourgeois philosophy, especially positivism, but certainly not Marxism. It must be remembered that China's introduction to the achievements of European civilisation coincided with the beginning of the country's colonial enslavement, and that the bearers of Western culture at this period were representatives of imperialist circles, whose interests lay in importing pro-imperialist ideology.

The prevalence of the traditional approach to the solution of philosophical problems and the fact that science was poorly developed meant that the borrowings by Chinese philosophers of elements of Western civilisation at the end of the last century took the form of a synthesis of Chinese speculative categories and European scientific concepts. Thus, Kang Yu-wei, whom we have already mentioned, associated electricity with Jen, the spiritual principle which the Confucianists regard as being inherent in all things. Yan Fu, a Right-wing bourgeois reformer, who was one of the leading translators of European philosophical works, provided his translations with commentaries in which he attempted to draw parallels between Western socio-philosophical theories and traditional currents of Chinese ancient and medieval socio-political thought, above all Confucianism.

Thus, one is probably justified in concluding that the modern Chinese philosophers as a whole did not rise above the level of their medieval predecessors. The creation of

modern philosophy, by which we mean philosophy on a level with the latest achievements in theoretical knowledge, could not be expected to produce significant results immediately, especially since, as we have seen, neo-Confucianism preserved its dominant role. Chinese philosophy between the seventeenth and the nineteenth century was essentially a modification of the original form of materialism and naive dialectics.

It was on such theoretical foundations that Mao Tse-tung's views took shape. Like the rest of his generation, Mao Tse-tung received a traditional education, which consisted mainly in the study of Confucian canons and other ancient texts.<sup>1</sup>

Mao Tse-tung himself admitted in a conversation with the American journalist E. Snow in 1936 during which he recounted his biography that in his youth he had mainly studied idealist philosophy, Confucian canons.

Nationalist prejudices were strong in the milieu in which Mao Tse-tung conducted his early revolutionary activities. Nationalism is extremely deep-rooted in China, and has an extremely long history.

For centuries it was a basic principle of Chinese policy, home and foreign, to regard China as the centre of the world. The Emperor was held to be the Son of Heaven, and thus Lord of the Celestial Empire—the whole world and of all its peoples. Accordingly, all the peoples with whom China came into direct contact in one way or another were regarded as subject to her and vassals of the Emperor of China. This view was kept alive by the fact that China had extremely limited political, economic and cultural relations with other countries, and was relatively isolated from most of the outside world. For centuries the Chinese ruling classes plumed themselves on the superiority of the Chinese nation and the unique features of Chinese civilisation, their own special customs and institutions. Such revolutionary-democratic intellectuals as Sun Yat-sen and Chen Tien-hua remarked on this tendency in the official ideology of medieval China to present China as the centre of the world.

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung attended the primary school in his native village of Shao Shan, Hunan Province. From there he went on to attend the school at Hsiang-hsiang, the district centre, and the secondary school and finally the pedagogical institute in the provincial town of Changsha.



and the Chinese people as a chosen people. Thus, Sun Yat-sen wrote: "*China thought very highly of her own achievements and looked down on other states. This became a habit and came to be regarded as perfectly natural.* As a result, China strove to isolate herself. For this reason, in undertaking any reforms the Chinese relied exclusively on their own experience and means, and made no attempt to borrow anything from others. China came to resemble a solitary desert island cast away. Never having known the advantages of mutual international assistance she has not learnt the art of borrowing the best from others to make up for one's own shortcomings. The Chinese regard anything they do not know and are incapable of doing as altogether impossible."<sup>1</sup> As Chen Tien-hua put it: "the Chinese are always boasting what a civilised and highly moral nation they are".<sup>2</sup>

The general stagnation of Chinese society encouraged the development of an ideology of national Sinocentrism, or Chinese nationalism, which we might call feudal or pre-bourgeois nationalism.<sup>3</sup>

The official ideology—Confucianism—promoted a spirit of devotion to tradition among the Chinese people. The ideologists of Chinese feudalism encouraged individual submission to one's social lot, to the State and to the Emperor, who was represented as fulfilling the noble mission of defending his subjects. These ideologists often presented their own class interests as those of the nation as a whole, and did their utmost to foster distrust towards other peoples and ethnic prejudices. The feudal state used Confucianism as a means of cultivating an exaggerated sense of belonging to a special ethnic group. This naturally produced ethnic prejudices among the masses and gave rise to smug belief in the unique position of the Chinese people, its philosophy and

<sup>1</sup> Sun Yat-sen, *Selected Works* (in Russian), Moscow, 1964, pp. 250-51 (emphasis added.—M.A., U. G.)

<sup>2</sup> *Selected Reference Materials on the History of Modern Chinese Ideology* (in Chinese), Peking, 1957, p. 685.

<sup>3</sup> Nationalism is generally associated with the bourgeoisie. However, this view ignores the fact that the formation of a nation is a long, complicated process, that the development of nationalism is thus also a process and passes through several stages, and that bourgeois nationalism arises on a particular ethnic basis.

culture, and conformism to the national conservative traditions.

The socio-economic conditions in feudal China gave rise to certain stereotypes of mass awareness which had the character of ethnic prejudices. A typical example was the view that the Chinese were the most civilised of peoples, and that all other ethnic groups were barbarians. The Chinese were convinced that their own customs and traditions, their own moral taboos, their own concepts of good and evil and their own cultural values were the best in the world.

When in the latter half of the nineteenth century China was reduced to the status of a colony of the imperialist powers and the Chinese people began to experience a double national yoke, there was a new upsurge of nationalism among various social strata.

Along with enslavement to European capital, China also found herself having to submit to unprecedented violation of her national customs and traditions, which was "justified" by reference to the country's political and social backwardness, and the spiritual inferiority of the Chinese people. It is not hard to imagine what psychological shock the Chinese must have suffered on meeting with this attitude from the European and American colonialists. The Chinese regarded the Europeans as people from another world, since their customs and traditions, their morality and concepts of right and wrong, and their cultural values were quite different from their own. It is not surprising therefore that the hatred of the Chinese towards the Manchurian conquerors should have been extended to the Europeans, who were referred to, among other things, as "foreign devils". Ethnic prejudices provided fertile soil for the development of nascent bourgeois nationalism.

Chinese intellectuals of various social convictions at the turn of the century based their ideas for the national rebirth of China not only on the natural right of every people to freedom and independence, but also upon references to China's glorious past and her unique political and spiritual institutions. While serving the purpose of awakening national awareness and inspiring patriotism among the masses, such references to the past promoted the spread of chauvinistic ideas, since a blind was drawn over the social contradictions which had characterised that past. The Chinese



bourgeois revolutionaries of every persuasion carried on propaganda that embodied a call for the rebirth of Chinese science, as being the most advanced in the world, the rebirth of Chinese culture, one of the most ancient cultures in the world, the rebirth of Chinese political institutions, supposedly unsurpassed anywhere, in short the rebirth of "Great China", the Celestial Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, from the very moment it appeared Chinese bourgeois nationalism had two distinct sides to it—the progressive and the reactionary. The former was associated with the struggle of the masses against Manchurian rule and against the enslavement of China by the imperialist powers. The latter involved the idea of Chinese superiority—a spirit of contempt for all things foreign and a sense of moral superiority over all other countries and peoples. Chinese bourgeois ideologists regarded the peoples of yellow race to be greater than all others and ascribed a special role to the Chinese (Hans), who in time were to establish their hegemony throughout the world.

This was the view, for example, of the ideologists of reform (Liang Chi-chao, Kang Yu-wei), who were strongly influenced by the social-Darwinist theory of national and racial struggle for survival. Convinced of the inevitability of racial conflict, they pressed for the establishment of a pan-Asian union of peoples of the yellow race capable of withstanding the pressure of the white nations.

The views of the Chinese revolutionary democrats were similar in many respects. Chen Tien-hua, for example, ascribed the success of "people of white race" to the fact that "from birth they feel friendship and love for people of their race and cruelty and hatred towards the people of other races".<sup>2</sup>

Chen's associate Tsou Jung expounded the idea of the superiority of the Chinese over the other peoples of yellow race. He wrote as follows: "The first race, the Han race, is quite unique among the peoples of the eastern hemisphere. From China proper, advancing along the banks of the Hwang Ho, they spread in all directions. *Our Han race*

*was indeed the only civilising agent in the East from earliest times.* The Koreans and the Japanese also developed from the Han race."<sup>1</sup> Further on he writes: "Although they had no capital, the Chinese (those who had emigrated from China.—*M.A., U.G.*) surpassed the people of other nationalities thanks to their industriousness. Those who had considerable basic capital began to compete and struggle on the market with large American and European trading firms, and held their own with them. Indeed, they have shown that they have the power to extend the wealth of their people, and can become the masters of the twentieth century and advance our noble Han people."<sup>2</sup>

While rightly exposing the rapacious and ruthless policy of the foreign powers acting hand in glove with the mercenary Manchu court, and calling upon the people to oppose them, Chen Tien-hua and Tsou Jung failed to provide a correct interpretation of the situation and indicate proper methods for effective opposition. Since they saw all social contradictions through the prism of national and racial conflicts, they called the people to arms against *foreigners in general*. Here again we see the influence of the nationalist psychology, whereby the characteristics of the exploiter classes of the oppressor nation (aggression, ruthlessness, and so on) are extended to the whole people, producing a stereotype of that nation. Thus, Tsou Jung referred to the Manchurians as barbarians and shepherds with bestial instincts, and tried to whip up hatred for them. "Let us all as one man rush forward and kill these foreign devils, and kill and take prisoner their families. If the Manchurians help the foreigners kill us, then we must first of all annihilate the Manchurians. If the mercenary officials help the foreigners to kill us, then we must first of all annihilate all these mercenary officials. Let everyone take up swords and only put them down when they have destroyed our enemies!

"My dear compatriots! Forward, kill! Forward, kill! Forward, kill! Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill our age-old enemies within the country, kill the new enemies that have come to our land, kill our despised traitors, toadying to the foreigners!

<sup>1</sup> Even those Chinese bourgeois ideologists who called upon people to learn from the West were mainly calling for no more than the adoption of the achievements of Western science and technology.

<sup>2</sup> *Selected Reference Materials*... p. 681.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 649 (emphasis added.—*M.A., U. G.*).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 650.



Kill! Kill! Kill!"<sup>1</sup> It is hard to see what could possibly come of such an appeal but senseless brutality.

The revolutionary democrats based their claim for China's right to freedom and independence on the nationalist idea of "Great China". Tsou Jung wrote: "China has always possessed qualities of mind embracing the universe and glory that has resounded throughout the world. She looked down from above upon other states, and her power held the five continents in awe. She had a territory of two million square li, four hundred million intelligent, talented people, a history of five thousand years, and was ruled by two great emperors and three great rulers. Moreover, our country lies in the temperate zone, the people possess natural intelligence, the land is rich and the rivers bountiful. No other country in the world can boast what we have."<sup>2</sup> Tsou even goes on to claim that but for the Manchurian invasion it would probably have been the Chinese and not the Western powers that subdued India, Poland, Egypt and Turkey.

Even that great son of the Chinese people Sun Yat-sen did not entirely escape the influence of bourgeois nationalism. He was unable to transcend his class outlook, and was wont to stress the uniqueness of the Chinese people.

The reader may feel that we are exaggerating the nationalist errors of the Chinese revolutionaries, both bourgeois and petty-bourgeois, and expecting too much of political leaders who expressed the hopes of social groups which had suffered such monstrous political, economic and spiritual oppression.

This is by no means the case. It is far from our intention to run down the leaders of the Chinese revolutionary movement at the turn of the century and accuse them of mortal sins. It must be borne in mind that many of the weaknesses from which their political programmes and views suffered were conditioned socially, politically and economically, above all by the unprecedented dual national yoke. Even the most progressive Chinese politicians were unable to free themselves entirely from the chains of bourgeois ideology, since in order to do so they would first have had to recognise the role of the working class and align themselves with

it. But we must point out their weaknesses if we are to give an accurate objective picture of the level Chinese social thought was at immediately before the Communist Party came on the scene as a political factor, and show what underlay the ideology of the Chinese bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and peasant revolutionaries, who influenced the theory and practice of many leaders of the Chinese Communist Party and whose followers joined the Party. And this involves examining the question of Chinese nationalism and drawing our own conclusions about it, since, as we have seen, it was an essential element in the ideology of Chinese revolutionaries of various shades and trends.<sup>1</sup>

We have examined Chinese nationalism at such length for the simple reason that it had a tremendous influence on Mao Tse-tung and the evolution of his views. The question of the role of the great-power ideas propounded by Chinese political leaders at the turn of the century in shaping Mao's outlook certainly deserves special attention. It must be remembered that Liang Chi-chao, Kang Yu-wei and Sun Yat-sen were still alive at the time when Mao began his political activities.

Nationalism and Sinocentrism became an essential feature of Mao Tse-tung's outlook and were later reflected in his theoretical and practical activity. In the conversations with E. Snow we have already mentioned, Mao Tse-tung said that after the triumph of the people's revolution in China, Outer Mongolia, or what is today the Mongolian People's Republic, would automatically become a part of

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps we should stress that ethnic prejudice is not the sole "prerogative" of the Chinese, but can be a feature, and indeed, as history has shown, is a feature of people of various nationalities in the age of capitalism, since it is in the interests of the bourgeoisie to set one national group against another. This can produce a solid battery of nationalistic propaganda aimed at the masses.

Ethnic prejudices can only be overcome as the result of a long, tortuous process. It can only be done by the proletariat, which by its very class nature is more inclined towards integration than any other social group. Only the triumph of socialism creates real opportunities for the elimination of national prejudice, but whether or not these opportunities are taken advantage of depends on correct leadership by the working class and its party. When a party contains strong petty-bourgeois elements, this greatly slows the process and indeed may promote a revival of ethnic prejudice, since chauvinism, national egoism and prejudice are typical petty-bourgeois characteristics.

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Reference Materials*... p. 672.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 644.



a Chinese federation. Mao made frequent similar statements after 1949, too, and this standpoint has been reflected in the practical solution of the question of China's national minorities. In the Chinese People's Republic the principle of *national self-determination* has been replaced with the principle of *national administrative autonomy*. In recent years Mao Tse-tung has been reviving the idea of the racial solidarity of the peoples of Asia and Africa, which even Sun Yat-sen abandoned in his latter years. Mao appeals in his propaganda to the national sentiment of the Chinese, attempting to consolidate Chinese unity on the basis of nationalism. Hostility and distrust towards the national minority groups in China is once more being fomented. Thus, Chinese propaganda has begun presenting Ulanfu, a Mongolian who prior to the Ninth Congress was one of the few representatives of the national minorities in the Central Committee, as a snake cowering beneath the blows of giants armed with submachine-guns and copies of *Quotations from Chairman Mao*.<sup>1</sup> In this way a sense of national exclusiveness is being cultivated among the Chinese and a sense of ethnic and national inferiority is being produced among China's other nationalities.

Lenin rightly pointed out that "there is nothing resembling 'sectarianism' in Marxism, in the sense of its being a hidebound, petrified doctrine, a doctrine which arose *away from* the high road of the development of world civilisation".<sup>2</sup> Maoist "philosophy", as distinct from Marxism-Leninism arose *mainly* on a narrow, national, Chinese basis, separate from the development of world philosophy.

It should be noted that in the first quarter of the present century the works of such classics of world philosophy as Bacon, Locke, Holbach, Kant, Hegel and Feuerbach had not yet been translated into Chinese. It was chiefly with the works of positivists and pragmatists such as Comte, Spencer, Russell, Dewey and James that the Chinese public (including Mao Tse-tung) were able to acquaint themselves through translations at that time.

In the early years of his revolutionary activities Mao Tse-tung was strongly attracted to anarchist ideas (especially

the works of Bakunin and Kropotkin), and has never really managed to free himself from their influence.

Mao had his first introduction to anarchist ideas while studying at the pedagogical institute, and the enthusiasm with which he embraced them was to last a long time. He continued to be very much under their spell when he went to Peking, and he admitted to E. Snow that he favoured many of the anarchist proposals at that time.<sup>1</sup> EMI Hsiao, a close friend of Mao's in those days, also mentions that Mao was at that time "strongly influenced by anarchist ideas". Mao himself confessed that in 1919 he had tried to organise a movement in Hunan for the "independence" of Hunan. With a group of young anarchists from the town of Changsha, he organised a demonstration with the slogans "For the independence of the individual provinces from the Peking government" and "For the introduction of democratic constitutions in every province". In the case of Mao Tse-tung, anarchist views were combined with elements of the bourgeois-democratic outlook, expressed in the fact that he wanted autonomous provinces to be incorporated in a federation, in "the idea of United Autonomous States of China".<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note how in organising the Hungweiping movement during the "cultural revolution", Mao Tse-tung drew on the anarchist experience of his youth, although he has rejected some of it today. The anarchist idea of destroying centralised state authority expressed in the Hungweiping movement as "polycentrism" and local separatism, no longer suits Mao now, since it threatens to undermine his own dictatorship. But in his younger days Mao thought otherwise.

Mao Tse-tung was also strongly influenced by the ideology of the peasant movements of medieval China, in particular the T'ai P'ing rebellion.

Mao's favourite heroes were Shih Huang Ti, the founder of the first Chinese Empire (3rd. c. B.C.), Liu Pang, founder of the Han Dynasty (3rd. c. B.C.), T'ang Tai Tsung, the first Emperor of the T'ang Dynasty (7th c. A.D.), Jenghiz Khan (12-13th c.), and Chu Yüan-chang (14th c.), leader

<sup>1</sup> See *Izvestia*, March 19, 1968.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 23.

<sup>1</sup> E. Snow, *Red Star Over China*, pp. 122-39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.



of a peasant revolt and founder of the Ming Dynasty. The figures he admired most in foreign history were Julius Caesar, Peter the Great, Catherine the Great and Napoleon.<sup>1</sup>

These favourite heroes are more than a passing passion of Mao's youth, they are a reflection of his own dictatorial nature. He has frequently referred to them in later years, and is wont to compare himself to Shih Huang Ti. Thus, in a speech at the second session of the Eighth Congress of the CPC in May 1958 which was published by the Hungweipings, Mao declared: "I maintain that we are stronger than Shih Huang Ti. He sent 460 people to their graves, while we have disposed of 46,000, a hundred times more than Shih Huang Ti. I once had a conversation with some democrats. They call us Shih Huang Ti, or despots. On the whole we accept their accusation. . . ."

Here is another example from the same collection of hitherto unpublished speeches by Mao Tse-tung. Mao tells his nephew: "If you read a lot of books, you'll never be emperor," and adds, "If you look at history you can see that none of the people who were famous for their wisdom and knowledge were outstanding figures."

Siao-yu, Mao's friend and fellow student at the pedagogical institute in Changsha, also testifies to this side of Mao's character. In his book *Mao Tse-tung and I Were Beggars*, he writes that Mao was already dreaming at that time of becoming another Liu Pang, a peasant who became Emperor. He reports Mao as saying to him: "Liu Pang was the first commoner in history to become Emperor... a successful revolutionist who succeeded in overthrowing the Ch'ing despot... he was founder of the Han Dynasty..." and "...should be considered to be a great hero!"

Siao-yu disagreed, arguing that Liu Pang was "a cruel despot... treacherous and absolutely devoid of human sentiment... Remember the friends and generals who risked their lives fighting for him? When his armies were successful, these men became famous leaders and he became afraid that one or another of them might try to usurp his throne; so he had them all killed."

Mao, however, hotly defended the "honour" of Liu Pang. "But if he had not killed them, his throne would have been

insecure and he probably wouldn't have lasted long as Emperor."<sup>1</sup>

The practice and rituals of the cult of Mao Tse-tung introduced during the "cultural revolution" suggest that the Napoleonic dreams of his youth have become the cornerstone of Mao's political views.

It is highly significant that whenever he speaks of China's future or of the services of the Chinese revolutionaries, Mao can think of nothing better than to compare their achievements to the activities of the ancient Chinese emperors Shih Huang Ti, Han Wu-ti and T'ang Tai Tsung, and Jenghiz Khan the conqueror.

Analysis of Mao Tse-tung's political views also shows him to be strongly influenced by the legist political system, a Chinese brand of Macchiavellianism and Jesuitism.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the ideological basis of Maoist philosophy is formed by concepts that are either anachronistic or reactionary in their socio-political essence.

<sup>1</sup> *Mao Tse-tung and I Were Beggars* by Siao-yu, Syracuse University Press, 1959, pp. 129-30.

<sup>2</sup> One of the champions of legism, Han Fei Tzu, wrote: "The ruler of a kingdom where order reigns knows how to skilfully suppress crime... But what means exist for the eradication of the most minor evil? (I answer): people must be forced to keep a careful watch on one another's sentiments. And how can they be forced to keep a close watch on one another? The inhabitants of the village must be forced to denounce one another. *The Classical Books*, Vol. 5, Han Fei Tzu (in Chinese), Peking, 1954, p. 367.

<sup>1</sup> E. Snow, op. cit., pp. 115-16, 121.



## ON MARXIST PHRASEOLOGY IN THE WORKS OF MAO TSE-TUNG

The whole of Maoist "philosophy" is basically set forth in 1) *Dialectical Materialism*, written in Yen-an in the late thirties on the basis of lectures given at the Party School there. A much altered extract was included in the *Selected Works* published during the fifties, in the form of two articles entitled "On Practice" and "On Contradiction". We hope to make clear further on why Mao Tse-tung did not have the whole text included in *Selected Works*; 2) the article "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People", published in 1957; 3) the article "Whence Does a Man Acquire Correct Ideas?" (1963), amounting to four type-written pages; 4) the articles "On New Democracy" and "On People's Democratic Dictatorship"; 5) the anti-Soviet editorials of the newspaper *Jen-min jih-pao* and journal *Hungchih* (1963-1965)<sup>1</sup>; 6) statements on philosophical questions made at various meetings and in connection with philosophical debates.<sup>2</sup>

If we analyse all these articles and statements it becomes patently evident that Mao Tse-tung makes use of Marxist phraseology purely as a means to an end, to camouflage for the time being his real views. At the same time, Mao's own interpretation of Marxism shows an extremely limited knowledge of the subject. This is hardly surprising, since the traditional education Mao received naturally did not include Marxist theory, while in the process of self-education

<sup>1</sup> According to the Hungweiping press all these articles were written on direct instructions from Mao, under his guidance and with his participation.

<sup>2</sup> As reported by the Chinese, and especially the Hungweiping press, sometimes verbatim.

tion he was unable to acquire a correct understanding of Marxism since he drew his information mainly from the works of petty-bourgeois socialists.

In the twenties Mao Tse-tung studied G. Kircupp's *History of Socialism*. Failing to distinguish between the political views of Lassalle, Rodbertus and Marx, Kircupp makes a superficial criticism of Marxist doctrine from the standpoint of petty-bourgeois socialism, and in particular of such important parts as the theory of labour, the theory of value, surplus value and so on. It would appear that Mao Tse-tung's negative attitude to Marx's *Capital* derives from the bias he acquired from the "indelible impression" Kircupp's book made on him.

Kircupp's book strengthened Mao Tse-tung's sympathy for anarchism, since Kircupp is full of praise for the anarchists, declaring the catechism of Bakunin (sharply criticised by Marx) and the views of Kropotkin to be revolutionary socialism. Kircupp rejects Marx's scientific socialism and preaches his own "moral socialism", declaring that socialism in the past frequently showed a tendency to degenerate into a rigid and sterile orthodoxy which tried to solve all problems with the aid of restricted and poorly assimilable theories.<sup>1</sup> Kircupp suggests that socialism should be purged of materialism and revolutionary orthodoxy. It must be noted that Mao Tse-tung adopted Kircupp's concept of "moral socialism".

Mao Tse-tung could only base his views of Marxism-Leninism on translations, since he knew no foreign languages. Moreover, in the early forties, and indeed right up to 1949, only a very small part of the works of the classics of Marxism-Leninism were available in Chinese.

In the twenties Mao's ignorance of Marxism-Leninism did not matter a great deal, in view of the generally deficient theoretical knowledge of the CPC leaders. After Mao usurped power in the CPC in 1935, however, the position was radically altered. Henceforth, Mao needed a knowledge of Marxist theory in order to strengthen his position in the Party leadership.

Not until the end of the thirties did Mao read odd chapters and extracts from Engels' *Ludwig Feuerbach, Anti-*

<sup>1</sup> See G. Kircupp, *History of Socialism*, London, 1920, p. 405.



*Dühring and Dialectics of Nature*, and Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* and *Philosophical Notebooks*. At roughly the same time he read Stalin's *The Foundations of Leninism* and *On the Foundations of Leninism* which, as we know, did not attempt to present all the wealth of Marxist-Leninist theory. A textual analysis of Mao's writings shows that all his quotations from Marx, Engels and Lenin were derived from these works of Stalin.

Any correct propositions as appear in Mao Tse-tung's works are simply a rehash of the ideas of Stalin and other Marxists, both Soviet and Chinese (the latter including Li Ta-chao, Chu Chiu-po, Peng Pai, Wang Ming and Ai Suzh'i), while his own "original" ideas are, as a rule, erroneous.

A close analysis of Mao Tse-tung's articles makes it clear that he had not read such fundamental Marxist works as *Capital*, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *The Holy Family* or *The German Ideology*. Indeed, Mao was wont to refer to those who took the trouble to study *Capital* as "doctrinairists, racking their brains to no avail".

Mao Tse-tung's attitude to Marx and his works was clearly expressed in quite unambiguous terms in a speech at the Second Session of the Eighth Party Congress in 1958, when he called for "the destruction of blind faith in Marx" and the indoctrination of the Chinese people with the "Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung". "Marx had two eyes and two hands, just like the rest of us, but his head was full of Marxism," Mao said. "However, there is no need to read everything Marx wrote. After all, he wrote so much! There is no need at all to read everything. Comrade Yang Hsien-chen,<sup>1</sup> have you read all of Marx? Yes, you have read

everything and you have climbed to the highest storey, whereas I have not and I have not yet got to the top. I think that those who are at the bottom should on no account be afraid of those who are at the top..."

How much Mao Tse-tung knows about Marxism can be gauged from the following rather self-effacing statement by Mao himself, made during a conversation with journalists and people from the publishing world on March 10, 1957.

"When somebody or other says that he understands Marxism it must be borne in mind that there are different degrees of understanding Marxism. I too have read a few books by the founders of Marxism. I don't know how many they wrote, but I imagine rather less than half have been translated in China. A specialist should read as much as possible. We have not much free time and can read less" (quoted from the Hungweiping newspaper *Tung fang hung*, July 1967).

These views of Mao on the study of the classics of Marxism and the question of whether it was indeed at all necessary for the Chinese to study the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin were developed by Kuo Mo-jo, President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Addressing scholars present at the inaugural meeting of the history society in the Kwangsi-Chuang autonomous region, Kuo Mo-jo called on the Chinese to study Marxism-Leninism from the *Selected Works* of Mao Tse-tung, which they should "read thoroughly" and "learn by heart", since the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin were "difficult" and "remote" from Chinese life. "Although Chinese translations exist which we can read, however conscientiously the translation was made, as soon as you begin reading them relative difficulties in understanding them arise. Moreover, the practice dealt with in these classic works is so remote from us that we have not experienced it ourselves and even when you want to look into them deeply, you are bound to find difficulties arising. The works of Chairman Mao are written in Chinese, and are moreover written simply, clearly and perfectly."<sup>1</sup>

egory of "counter-revolutionaries" and "enemies of the Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung". His present fate is unknown.

<sup>1</sup> *Kwangsi jih-pao*, March 26, 1963, in Chinese.

<sup>1</sup> Yang Hsien-chen, famous Chinese Marxist philosopher, member of the CPC Central Committee, eighth convocation, pro-rector of the Central Committee's Party School. He criticised Mao Tse-tung's voluntarist views, declaring them to be subjective idealism and neo-Machism. A persecution campaign was launched against him (1959-1962) under cover of a debate on "the identity of existence and thought", and in 1964 he was publicly declared to be a "revisionist". His views were "condemned" in the course of a debate on the subject of the "dissolution of the entity", which was a prelude to the "cultural revolution". (We shall return to this subject in greater detail further on.) During the "cultural revolution" Yang Hsien-chen was declared "ideologist of the Black Gang of Liu Shao-chi" and included in the cat-



Mao's supporters attempt to justify their scornful attitude towards world socialist thought and scientific socialism by insisting that socialism developed on a purely Chinese basis. During the "rectification" movement of 1942 to 1944, at the time when the Party was being "purged" of the influence of Marxism-Leninism and the Comintern, Chen Po-ta, now a leading Maoist theoretician, wrote the following, which conforms perfectly to the spirit of that campaign. "Socialism has been the dream of the best representatives of our nation for thousands of years. The thinker Mo-tzu (5th c. B.C.) called this dream 'universal love', while in the treatise *Li Yuan* it is referred to as the 'great union'.... The ideals of socialism and communism—of 'great union'—in the case of our nation have not been introduced from outside, but are a historical need inherent in our nation."

Analysis of bibliographic sources of the published works of Mao Tse-tung shows how totally unfounded and absurd are the claims of the sacristans of the Mao cult that their leader "brilliantly, creatively, and all-embracingly inherited, defended and developed Marxism-Leninism, raising it to a new stage".

In all of Mao Tse-tung's works, if we try to trace his sources we find a preponderance of references to, or quota-

References to, or quotations from	Percentage of references in all 4 volumes
1. Confucian and neo-Confucian writings . . . . .	22
2. Taoist and Mohist writings . . . . .	12
3. Folklore legends, pure belles lettres. . . . .	13
4. Other Chinese and foreign writers, unclassified . . . . .	7
5. Marx and Engels . . . . .	4
6. Lenin . . . . .	18
7. Stalin . . . . .	24
TOTAL . . . . .	100%

tions from Confucius, Mencius and other ancient and medieval Chinese sages. The bourgeois Sinologist V. Holubnychy made a careful textual study of the works of Mao Tse-tung and drew up the following statistical table of the sources quoted by Mao in all four volumes of *Selected Works*.<sup>1</sup>

We checked these figures for ourselves and found them to be basically correct. While it naturally cannot be assumed that Mao Tse-tung has only read those authors he quotes in his works, this table nevertheless serves to give a fair idea of the range of authors he has studied.

The Soviet film director R. Karmen who spent over a year in China in 1939-1940 and met Mao Tse-tung in Yen-an on several occasions provides another extremely convincing testimony to the ideological substratum of Mao's views. In his *A Year in China*, published in 1941, he mentions that in his conversations and speeches Mao Tse-tung was constantly quoting Confucius.<sup>2</sup> This is also confirmed by the memoirs of Otto Braun (Li Te), an outstanding German Communist and internationalist who was military adviser to the Central Committee of the CPC in the thirties and was for many years closely acquainted with Mao.<sup>3</sup>

It so happened that thanks to the efforts of Ai Szu-ch'i and other Marxists several Soviet philosophy manuals were translated into Chinese in the thirties. Mao Tse-tung thus had ample opportunity to acquire a correct understanding of the basic principles of Marxist philosophy, had he so wished. But his "philosophical" works show that he was either unable or unwilling to take advantage of the information on Marxist-Leninist philosophy contained in Soviet popular philosophy manuals. This is certainly suggested by the numerous distortions of Marxist theses that are to be found in Mao Tse-tung's writings from the forties onwards.

Mao's first "philosophical" work, as we have already mentioned, was the pamphlet *Dialectical Materialism*. The list of contents reproduced below should give the reader a good idea of its subject matter.

<sup>1</sup> V. Holubnychy, "Mao Tse-tung's Materialistic Dialectics", *China Quarterly*, July-September, 1964, No. 19, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> R. Karmen, *A Year in China* (in Russian), Moscow, 1941, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> Otto Braun, *From Shanghai to Yen-an* (in German), 1969.



## Chapter I. Idealism and Materialism

- I. The war between two armies in philosophy.
- II. The difference between idealism and materialism.
- III. The source of the rise and development of idealism.
- IV. The origin of the inception and development of materialism.

## Chapter II. Dialectical Materialism

- I. Dialectical materialism is the revolutionary arm of the proletariat.
- II. The relationship between the old philosophical heritage and dialectical materialism.
- III. The unity of world view and methodology in dialectical materialism.
- IV. The question of the object of materialist dialectics—what do materialist dialectics serve to study?
- V. On matter.
- VI. On movement (on development).
- VII. On space and time.
- VIII. On awareness.
- IX. On reflection.
- X. On truth.
- XI. On practice (on the connection between cognition and practice, theory and action, knowledge and action).

## Chapter III. Materialist Dialectics

- I. The law of the unity of opposites.
  - a) Two views of development.
  - b) The formal-logistic law of identity and the dialectical law of contradiction.
  - c) The universality of contradiction.
  - d) The particularity of contradiction.
  - e) The principal contradiction and the principal aspect of a contradiction.
  - f) Identity and struggle of the aspects of a contradiction.
  - g) The place of antagonism in the line of contradictions.

A detailed analysis of the text revealed that it was based entirely on two Soviet works, the text-book *Dialectical*

*Materialism* (Moscow 1933, general editor M. Mitin), and the article of the same name published in volume 22 of the first edition of the *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopedia*.

Mao Tse-tung's pamphlet is really no more than a recapitulation of these two works. Whole passages have been "lifted" wholesale, with little or no change. This is especially true of those problems which were never examined at all in traditional Chinese philosophy, or which were treated at a very low theoretical level and which required a knowledge of natural science and the historical development of world philosophy to be properly understood. Such problems include the question of the material nature of the world, the forms in which matter exists, especially space and time, and objective, relative and absolute truth.

Yet despite the fact that Mao Tse-tung is merely retelling in Chinese the correct theses contained in Soviet works, he nevertheless manages to distort and vulgarise them.

According to Mao, the basic social cause of idealism is the antithesis between intellectual labour and manual labour. "...The earliest manifestation of idealism was brought about by the superstition and ignorance of primitive, savage man. But with the development of production, *the separation between manual labour and intellectual labour was responsible for ranking idealism first among currents of philosophical thought.* With the development of the productive forces of society, the division of labour made its appearance; the further development of the division of labour saw the emergence of persons devoting themselves entirely and exclusively to intellectual labour. But when the productive forces are still weak, the division between the two does not reach the stage of complete separation. Only after classes and private property appear and exploitation becomes the foundation of the existence of the ruling class do great changes occur. Intellectual labour then becomes the exclusive privilege of the ruling class, while manual labour becomes the fate of the oppressed classes. The ruling class begins to examine the relationship between themselves and the oppressed classes in an upside-down fashion: It is not the labourers who provide them with the means for existence, but rather they who provide the labourers with the means of existence. They therefore despise manual labour and develop idealist conceptions. The elimination of the differences



between manual labour and intellectual labour is one of the preconditions for eliminating idealist philosophy."<sup>1</sup>

Mao Tse-tung is quite wrong in identifying the causes of the appearance of the illusion about the independent development of ideology with the social roots of idealism. In actual fact, the division of labour into intellectual and manual work, while demoralising man and entailing on him special social functions, at the same time gives a strong impulse to the development of the productive forces, science and the arts. This can be seen from the first antagonistic class society. As Engels wrote: "It was slavery that first made possible the division of labour between agriculture and industry on a larger scale, and thereby also Hellenism, the flowering of the ancient world. Without slavery, no Greek state, no Greek art and science. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

As for the social roots of idealism, they lie in the division of society into classes and the urge of the exploiter classes to retain and strengthen their rule.

Mao Tse-tung's articles "On Practice" and "On Contradiction" included in the *Selected Works* also contain extensive borrowings from the above-mentioned Soviet textbook and *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopedia*.<sup>3</sup> One example is the thesis of the two views concerning the laws of development of the world: the metaphysical and the dialectical. Once again, the Marxist theses borrowed from the Soviet works appear side by side with over-simplified, vulgarised interpretations of numerous problems and even un-Marxist and anti-Marxist theses. This is particularly evident in Mao's treatment of the basic law of dialectics.<sup>4</sup>

The outward resemblance Mao's two articles bear to genuine Marxist works, as regards terminology, added to the fact that they contain such extensive borrowings of theses from Soviet works, often blinds people to their real content and significance. This misunderstanding is further increased

<sup>1</sup> *Dialectical Materialism*, Talien, p. 5 (emphasis added.—M.A., U. G.).

<sup>2</sup> F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow, 1969, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup> From "The Law of the Unity of Opposites", the fourth section of the chapter of the text-book entitled *The Laws of Materialist Dialectics*, and from the section "The Law of the Unity of Opposites" and the article "Dialectical Materialism" in the *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopedia*.

<sup>4</sup> Discussed further on.

by the references to A. M. Deborin and the "Menshevikising idealists". However, in our opinion, the politico-philosophical errors of the Deborin group could not possibly have any bearing on China, since the CPC cadres were, for objective reasons, far removed from philosophical debates in the USSR. The only people who might have some idea of the views of Deborin and his group were the Chinese students studying in Moscow or CPC representatives in the Comintern. The majority of these adopted an internationalist standpoint, and on their return to China represented a serious threat to the nationalist policy of Mao Tse-tung. It was these people that Mao Tse-tung had in mind when he spoke of the influence of Deborin's idealism on certain members of the CPC and of political errors of a doctrinaire nature. In insisting on the need to combat Deborin and his group, Mao was pursuing two aims: he was preparing an alibi for the liquidation of genuine internationalist Communists and at the same time proclaiming his own "fidelity" to Marxism.

Mao Tse-tung's articles and statements on philosophy dating from the 1950s and 1960s (for example, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People", 1957, and his instructions regarding the debate on the "dissolution of the entity" 1964) show an ever-increasing distortion and vulgarisation of Marxism-Leninism. We shall be discussing this in detail in another chapter, and shall therefore restrict ourselves at this stage to one example.

*Quotations from Chairman Mao* contains the following idea on idealism and metaphysics, materialism and dialectics, purporting to date from 1955. "In the world only idealism and metaphysics require the minimum of effort, for they enable people to talk all kinds of rubbish without taking objective reality into account and without testing what they say in real life. Materialism and dialectics, on the contrary, require effort from people, for they are based on objective reality and are tested in real life.

"Unless one makes an effort it is easy to slide towards idealism and metaphysics."<sup>1</sup>

If in the late thirties Mao Tse-tung was still making some kind of effort to disclose the real causes of the appearance of various trends in philosophy, albeit distorting the Marxist

<sup>1</sup> *Quotations from Mao Tse-tung's Works* (in Russian), pp. 220-21.



viewpoint, twenty years later he reduces the whole problem to the amount of effort the philosopher, scientist, scholar or practical man expends in his particular field of activity. Such an attitude begs the conclusion that all industrious people are materialists and dialecticians while all lazy people are idealists and metaphysicians. According to this thesis, that great son of the Chinese people Sun Yat-sen clearly falls into the latter category, since he is well known to have been an idealist in his philosophical views.

The fact that Mao Tse-tung uses Marxist phraseology in his works and that some of the Maoist theses bear a formal resemblance to the ideas of Marxism-Leninism enables the Maoists to camouflage the true essence of "Mao Tse-tung's Thoughts". Moreover, Mao is fond of quoting Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, and makes frequent "oaths of allegiance" to the Marxist cause and the ideals of Marxism-Leninism. However, does this really provide grounds for regarding Mao, if not as an "outstanding Marxist-Leninist", at least as an ordinary run-of-the-mill Marxist philosopher, or for blaming Soviet philosophy or Marxism-Leninism in general for the appearance of Maoism, as bourgeois propagandists are wont to do?

It certainly does not. A detailed analysis of the views of Mao Tse-tung shows that anti-Marxist ideas predominate in his theories, so that the borrowed Marxist theses are really an alien element in his "philosophy". This is especially clear from those parts of his writings where he offers his own interpretation of problems treated by Marxism-Leninism. Mao's supporters extol him not so much for his repetition of general truths as for those formulations which represent an essential departure from the Marxist-Leninist philosophical treatment of such problems as proletarian revolution, war and peace, class relations and the class struggle under socialism which we shall be dealing with in later chapters.

The frequent appeals Mao makes in his writings to the authority of Stalin and citations from him were also intended simply to create the impression of adherence to Marxism-Leninism and the communist movement. In actual fact, Mao makes hypocritical use of Stalin's name for attacks on the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. A collection of Mao's speeches at closed meetings, published by the Hungweipings, reveals that Mao called Stalin a metaphysi-

cian and accused him of being opposed to the Chinese revolution. In "Three Milestones in the Development of Marxism", distributed by the Hungweipings, it is claimed that as a result of Stalin's theoretical errors, Marxism began to "mark time" in the Soviet Union. Curiously enough, the date given for the beginning of this "marking time" is 1935, the year Mao Tse-tung "assumed leadership" of the CPC.

It is quite clear even from this brief examination of the story of Mao Tse-tung's acquaintanceship with Marxism-Leninism that he never was a Marxist, and that the Maoist claim that he "inherited", "defended" and "developed" Marxism-Leninism is just another myth. It is paradoxical and absurd when a hidebound chauvinist suffering from megalomania aspires to become a classic of Marxism-Leninism.



## THE IDEALIST ESSENCE OF MAOIST PHILOSOPHY

## 1. Subjective Idealism Instead of the Materialist View of History

What are the basic tenets of Mao Tse-tung's outlook? The Marxist propositions that occur with such frequency in Mao's writings by no means tally with his own "original" interpretations of many philosophical questions in which he expresses his own basic outlook. This applies to problems concerning the relationship between the objective laws of social development and conscious human activity, the economic basis of society and its political superstructure, social being and social ideas. In order to make a correct assessment of the essence of Maoist "philosophy" it is necessary to examine the way it treats the relationship between theory and practice, between spiritual and material activity. It is necessary to see whether the Maoists are guided by the principles of Marxism-Leninism in their approach to social phenomena, in their activities and policy-making. In other words, it is necessary to bracket off the Marxist terminology Maoism exploits.

If we examine Maoism from this point of view, we shall find that it takes its departure from the primacy of the subjective factor: "subjective activity", politics and ideas. This is expressed in such premises as the following: production relations and not the productive forces play the major role in the socialist mode of production; politics and not economics are the ruling factor in socialist society; moral impulses and not material interest are the main factor in building socialism; men and not weapons decide the outcome of a war.

In the final analysis, all such premises are reducible to the thesis that subjective activity, falsely interpreted, is the decisive factor in socialist society, which really amounts to

an attempt to subject the objective laws of socialist construction to the subjective activities of the leadership and provide a theoretical justification for subjectivism, voluntarism and adventurism in home and foreign policy.

In 1958 and 1959 the question of subjective activity was being widely debated in China. At about the same time "the theory of subjective activity" began to be extensively propagated, every effort being made to exalt the role of Mao in the development of this theory. The following two quotations are taken from the manual *Dialectical Materialism*, published in Peking in 1961.

1) Waging a resolute struggle with all kinds of opportunist elements who denied or minimised the role of the subjective activity of the masses, Mao Tse-tung made not only a theoretical but also a tremendous political contribution to the development of the theory of subjective activity. He not only gave a precise Marxist definition of subjective activity in the Marxist sense, and showed clearly and concretely how subjective activity plays a decisive role in certain circumstances; he also made a comprehensive and profound study, based on the close unity of materialism and dialectics, of the existence of dialectical links between the subjective and objective, subjective activity and objective laws, revolutionary spirit and the scientific approach.

2) Comrade Mao Tse-tung's new contribution to Marxist philosophy consists not only in the fact that on the basis of the contradiction between subjective and objective he provides a clear and positive answer to the decisive role of subjective activity in certain circumstances, but also in the fact that with reference to the basic spheres of social life and the practical activity of the Party he gives our Party an even more powerful theoretical weapon for guiding the people in the struggle for the grandiose transformation of the world.

One cannot help being struck by the extravagant claim that Marxism owes a large debt to Mao Tse-tung for his insistence on the "decisive role of subjective activity". Marxism-Leninism does not deny the importance of the subjective factor in the development of socialist society; on the contrary, it insists that it plays an increasingly important role as socialist construction develops successfully. This is because the communist and workers' parties, relying on



knowledge of the objective laws of social development, can make use of them in the interests of the whole of society, so that people's activities acquire a purposeful, conscious character.

Nevertheless, the development of socialist society is as much conditioned by material factors, objective, as the development of any other stage of human society. Failure to take sufficient account of the influence of material factors on people's socio-economic activity, and especially failure to recognise them altogether, cannot but have a negative effect on the development of socialist society.

Contrary to Marxism-Leninism, the Maoists overemphasise subjective activity, ignoring the dialectical unity of the objective laws of social development and conscious activity. They call the Marxist-Leninists "mechanists", since, to quote them, "refusing to recognise that man is the decisive factor in the relationship between men and things, they make a one-sided insistence on man's activities being determined by dead patterns of objective laws, on man being only able to passively submit to laws".<sup>1</sup> On the basis of the fact that the role of the subjective factor increases immeasurably under socialism, the Maoists draw a metaphysical contrast between objective law and human activity, divorcing them from one another.

The main thing, however, is that the Maoists interpret subjective activity not as the purposeful activity of the masses, based on knowledge of the laws of social development, but as their activity to implement the designs of their leaders. Thus, the talk of Mao Tse-tung's contribution to the development of the "theory of subjective activity", is to be understood as an apology for activity that is not subject to any objective laws, or in other words, voluntarism and subjectivism. This is a subjective-idealist viewpoint.

One very important point must be borne in mind in analysing Maoist "philosophy". In order to mask their departure from Marxism-Leninism, Mao and his supporters frequently resort to the trick of taking a correct Marxist thesis and interpreting it in their own way, stressing whatever aspect of it happens to suit their particular purpose, inflating and absolutising a part of the whole, taking care, however, to

<sup>1</sup> *Dialectical Materialism*, Peking, 1961, p. 10.

quote the whole proposition in order that their distortion should not be too obvious.

Thus, in the case in point, their revision of the Marxist thesis of the dialectical interrelationship of objective laws of social development and conscious human activity in socialist society is carefully masked by placing the emphasis on the latter while nevertheless mentioning the need to take the former into account.

Maoist distortions of Marxist theses can be discovered not only by making a careful study of their theoretical exercises and a thorough analysis and comparison of all their statements on a given question, but also by finding out when, in what circumstances, and for what reason, they choose to stress a particular proposition. Thus, Mao Tse-tung's subjective-idealist approach to the question of the objective laws of social development becomes even more apparent if it is remembered that this argument in favour of subjective activity was put forward at the time of the Great Leap Forward and the "people's communes".

As a further example of the way the Maoists covertly distort the Marxist theory of the relationship between subjective activity and objective laws, let us take a look at a passage from an article published in 1965 in the review *Hsin-chian She*, organ of the department of philosophical and social sciences of the Academy of Sciences of the Chinese People's Republic. Once again we are dealing with a subjective-idealist interpretation of the role of man in material production. "...Although the instruments of labour in production, the objects of labour, weapons in war, etc., are extremely important, and although they are undoubtedly an important factor in production and war, nevertheless, they occupy a place of secondary importance compared to man. Wherever it may be, in the production struggle or in the class struggle, it is man and not material that plays the decisive role."<sup>1</sup> This is because man is active while material is passive, the authors explain. Man "...can think, can work, has a subjective activity, can cognise the world, while material does not possess these attributes". "The most important things are the instruments of labour in production and weapons in war.... But, apart from human activity, nature

<sup>1</sup> *Hsin-chian She*, 1965, No. 7, p. 23.



cannot provide man with the necessary instruments of labour and weapons. Apart from human activity, the instruments and weapons that have been produced turn to rubbish."<sup>1</sup>

But perhaps all this is simply advanced in defence of man's active essence? We have only to remember that the above was written at a time when China's industrial development rates had slowed down after the spectacular failure of the Great Leap and the "people's communes", at a time when the role of technology and technological progress was being disparaged if not ignored, and the idea that "the atom bomb is a paper tiger" was being churned out non-stop, to realise its clear anti-Marxist implications, to understand that we have to do with a deliberate attempt to exaggerate the role of man in material production.

Marxism-Leninism has always stressed the decisive role of man in social production. Suffice it to remember Lenin's words that the worker, the working man is the prime productive force of all mankind. But Marxism-Leninism has never separated man from the other elements of the productive forces and set him up in contrast to them. Man is the chief, but not the only, component of the productive forces. Unwitting or deliberate failure to recognise this principle blots out the fundamental distinctions between different modes of production, since every society is characterised by a certain level of development of the productive forces.

Marxism-Leninism rejects the view that reason plays the decisive role in the development of the productive forces and the means of production, in the process of creating and using the instruments of labour. In exerting an influence on nature, man changes himself as well as nature, improving himself in the process of improving the instruments of labour. But this depends on the level of development of the productive forces at a given point. It must be remembered that man's powers and possibilities in a particular historical age are limited by the level of development of material production, and above all of the instruments of labour.

Naturally, the instruments of labour are worth nothing without man. But this is no reason for denying their importance, for man's powers are manifested in the level of development of the instruments of labour.

The Maoists, however, contrast man to the other elements of the productive forces, and even go as far as to deny the role of the instruments of labour in the development of society. Take, for example, their approach to the material factors in war. The atom bomb and other modern weapons are described as "paper tigers", and the material, technological factor in war is practically dismissed. The following thesis of Mao Tse-tung is significant in this respect. "Weapons are an important factor in war but not the decisive one. It is man and not material that counts."<sup>1</sup> It is no accident that in discussing revolution, the Maoists completely ignore objective factors and accord the decisive role to subjective political factors.

The Maoists preach nihilism with regard to science and technology, as is expressed in such slogans as "destroy faith in scientific authorities" and "make every worker and peasant a scientist". In the conditions of the modern scientific and technological revolution when science is becoming a direct productive force of society, such practice would inevitably lead to the stagnation of scientific research.

In our opinion, this is merely to be regarded as a further example of that typical Maoist habit of separating theory from practice and adopting a narrow utilitarian approach to theory. Mao Tse-tung is hardly unaware of the growing role of the natural sciences in modern society, since the use of scientific achievements increases man's control over nature. That he is not, is borne out by the fact that the majority of scientific institutions and scientists engaged on the creation of nuclear weapons were not subjected to criticism during the "cultural revolution". It was the social science that bore the brunt of the attack. It seems clear that Mao was making a bugbear of "pseudo-science" and "worship of scientific authorities" for the purpose of getting at his political opponents. The Maoists have not questioned the value of applying the natural sciences in practice, and there is no indication that they intend to do so in the future.

Mao's fetishisation of the role of man in production is inseparably linked with his misinterpretation of the inter-relationship between the productive forces and relations of production, between the foundation and the superstructure.

<sup>1</sup> Hsin-chian She, 1965, No. 7, p. 23.

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Two, p. 92.



The Marxist view on this question is expressed in the following passage by Marx, which Lenin pointed to as summing up the materialist concept of history. "In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. . . . Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social productive forces and the relations of production."<sup>1</sup>

Maoism adopts an entirely different approach to the question of the relationship between the productive forces and relations of production. As we have already seen, Mao Tse-tung makes the thesis "Politics takes command" his point of departure. Moreover, this elevation of politics to the position of command is to be understood as the subjection of the objective development of the productive forces to arbitrary decisions. According to Mao Tse-tung, the motive force of social development is not the development of the productive forces, conditioning the nature of the relations of production, but the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, class contradictions, and the

<sup>1</sup> K. Marx, F. Engels, *Selected Works*. In three volumes, Moscow, 1969, Vol. 1, pp. 503-504.

contradiction between the old and the new, all treated abstractly.

Thus, Mao writes in "On Contradiction": "Changes in society are chiefly due to the development of internal contradictions in society, namely, the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, the contradiction between the classes, and the contradiction between the old and the new; it is the development of these contradictions that impels society forward and starts the process of the supercession of the old society by a new one."<sup>1</sup>

In a speech in Shanghai in August 1957, Mao Tse-tung attacked the thesis of the Eighth Congress of the CPC (1956) that the contradiction between an advanced social order and backward productive forces was coming more and more to the fore in China. In his speech Mao declared: "The statement that the advanced social order in China has entered into contradiction with the backward productive forces is wrong."<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung ascribes the main role in the system of productive forces and relations of production to the latter, regarding the introduction of new relations of production to be possible independently of the level of development of the productive forces. Secondly, he regards the introduction of new relations of production as the result not of objective necessity inherent in the process of material production but of subjective will.<sup>3</sup>

The Maoists hold that it is possible to improve artificially the relations of production in order to solve the tasks of China's socio-economic development. This was the aim pursued in the Great Leap Forward and the people's communes. The slogan of a rapid transition to communism was advanced at the initial stage of the building of socialism in China. The people's communes were widely advertised as being the first cells of the future communist society. The lamentable results of this "experiment" are common knowledge.

The artificial improvement of the relations of production, which amounted to various kinds of political-organisational

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Two, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> From the Hungweiping newspaper *Tung fang hung*, July, 1967.

<sup>3</sup> Maoist reservations, as in the cases we examined above, are simply a tactical device designed to camouflage their revision of the Marxist view of history.



reshaping of agriculture and industry, was associated with deliberate intensification of the class struggle, as expressed in a succession of political campaigns and mass movements, viz., the campaigns against the "Three-Antis" and "Five-Antis" (1952-1953), the struggle against "right opportunist elements" (1957-1958), the movement for the rectification of styles of work (1958), the campaign for "devotion of the heart to the Party" (1958-1959), the socialist education movement in the countryside (1962-1963), and, finally, the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" (1966-1969).

This anti-Marxist, idealist approach has its logical conclusion in the formula "The power of Mao Tse-tung's Thought is infinite".

Debasing Marx's thesis that theory becomes a material force when it takes hold of the masses, the Maoists claim that "Mao Tse-tung's Thought" can be applied with great success in the production of atom bombs, complicated surgical operations, the transplanting of human organs, the sale of melons and even the introduction of good sanitation in the towns. Lin Piao declared the writings and thoughts of Mao Tse-tung to be the key to the solution of absolutely any problem, and that "with their aid it is easy to obtain immediate, tangible results".

The newspaper *Heng-yan jih-pao* wrote: "Reading the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung is not simply reading but a great task on which the success or defeat of the socialist revolution and the building of socialism depends.... It is a great task on which the destiny of mankind depends. One must read them constantly, systematically, always."<sup>1</sup>

The army newspaper *Jiefangjun pao* made equally staggering claims. "Our country's boundless might mainly consists in the fact that we have the powerful, invincible thoughts of Mao Tse-tung."<sup>2</sup>

The work of the masses and economic construction are quite incidental: Mao Tse-tung and his "Thought" are the alpha and the omega. "Mao Tse-tung's Thought", like Hegel's Absolute, is the source of social development and, becoming a material force, forms the economic foundation and political superstructure of society.

<sup>1</sup> *Heng-yan jih-pao*, February 14, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> *Jiefangjun pao*, March 2, 1966.

Moreover, the Maoists ascribe to Mao Tse-tung's Thought the power to determine the destiny of the world socialist revolution and the development of all human society. Thus, the newspaper *Jen-min jih-pao* writes: "When Mao Tse-tung's Thought is current throughout the world, when it has been gradually adopted by the revolutionary peoples of the whole world, it will be able to change the spiritual profile of the revolutionary peoples of the world and transform a spiritual force into a powerful material force. Once they have accepted Mao Tse-tung's Thought, the revolutionary peoples of the world will smash the old world with tremendous, irresistible force, completely bury imperialism, modern revisionism and reaction in all countries and will build on earth an infinitely bright, great new communist world of unsurpassed beauty, a world without oppression and exploitation."<sup>1</sup>

As the French publicist J. E. Vidal remarked, Mao Tse-tung substitutes subjectivism for Marxism-Leninism. "The ideas of Mao Tse-tung will become a 'material force' from which the condition of the productive forces will depend. This subjective, idealist concept of history leads to pure voluntarism. The human will can act independently of objective laws and historical necessity. An unlimited role is ascribed to the invincible Thought of Mao Tse-tung. Thus, moral education becomes the main form of activity in the transformation of society."<sup>2</sup>

Clearly, the Marxist thesis of the relative independence of ideology has been interpreted unscientifically in Maoism, and Marx's thesis that theory becomes a material force when it takes hold of the masses has been debased.

Marxist-Leninists have always attributed an important role to ideas in social development, holding that they can serve to accelerate it, but this is only the case provided these ideas reflect real life, class relations, the development of science, and economic progress. The viability and invincibility of Marxist ideas, their accelerating influence on the social process is due to their scientific nature, the fact that they correspond to the laws of social development. It is by virtue of this that they become a material force in the trans-

<sup>1</sup> *Jen-min jih-pao*, June 20, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> *L'humanité*, January 10, 1968.



formation of the world. The "ideas" of Mao are quite devoid of vitalising force, since they are not based on science and do not correspond to the objective laws of social development, so that their realisation in practice is only leading to failures in China's home and foreign policy.

Maoism revises the Marxist-Leninist thesis of the role of the masses and personality in history, exaggerating the latter and reviving hero-worship, and regarding the masses as a faceless herd obedient to the will of their leaders.

This subjective-sociological interpretation of the role of the individual in history is clearly expressed in the exaggeration of Mao Tse-tung's role in the history of the Chinese revolution, socialist construction, and the world historical process, with corresponding minimisation of the role of the masses and the communist party. It is expressed in the personality cult of Mao Tse-tung. The activities of the CPC throughout its history are identified with the activities of one man, Mao Tse-tung. Maoist propaganda presents Mao as a kind of superman, a genius such as is only born once in several centuries, so that unquestioning obedience to him is the guarantee of success for China. "To always think of Chairman Mao, obey Chairman Mao in everything, follow Chairman Mao, do everything in the name of Chairman Mao."<sup>1</sup> The Chinese and the peoples of the world are called upon to be "good warriors", "obedient buffaloes" and "stainless screws" of Mao Tse-tung.

This is far more than a rebirth or echoing of the populist theory of "heroes" and the "crowd". In the one case it was a question of a plurality of heroes, of the hero in general. In the other case it is a question of one hero who is able to change or dispose altogether of the laws of social development as he thinks fit.

The Chinese press is used to deify Mao and glorify his obedient servants. It has no interest at all in the masses as such, as the real hero of the historical process and participant in the revolutionary transformation of society. In Maoist theory and practice alike, the masses are simply "extras" doing whatever they are ordered by Mao. According to the logic of Maoist philosophy, the masses are incapable of conscious, organised activity, but are only able to obey and

blindly "follow the leader", that is, *the* leader. This is expressed in Mao Tse-tung's "idea" that the Chinese people is a clean sheet of paper. "A clean sheet of paper has no blotches, and so the newest and most beautiful words can be written on it, the newest and most beautiful pictures can be painted on it."<sup>1</sup> Such a concept of the respective historical roles of the individual and the masses has nothing at all to do with Marxism-Leninism. It is but a highly pernicious personality cult of a leader standing above the people. It is mistrust of the masses, mockery of the masses.

Just how far the Mao Tse-tung personality cult has gone can be gauged from the following statement made by Lin Piao at a meeting in November, 1966. "The words of Chairman Mao are words of the highest order, highly authoritative, possessing tremendous power, true to the last word; each word is equivalent to ten thousand words uttered by others." This excessive veneration for the word of Mao is somewhat reminiscent of the awe and reverence with which the Bible was once regarded.

Under the Mao Tse-tung personality cult the Chinese people are being educated in a spirit of complete subservience to the leader. Ordinary Chinese are made to repeat such things as "The concern of Chairman Mao is greater than the earth and sky. Chairman Mao is closer than father or mother. But for Chairman Mao, I could not exist..."<sup>2</sup> All the writings of Mao Tse-tung are regarded as Holy Writ. "We must study the works of Mao Tse-tung daily. If we fail to study the works of the leader for but one day, numerous questions will arise; if we do not study them for two days we shall slide downhill, and it is quite impossible to live for three days without the works of the leader."<sup>3</sup>

Maoism preaches a subjectivist view of history, regarding the political and theoretical activity of Mao Tse-tung as the sole cause of social development.

From the Maoist point of view, social development is not an objective historical process but a chain of manifestations of the "wise designs" of Mao Tse-tung. "Without the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung, there would not be the great,

<sup>1</sup> *Kitai* (China), 1968, No. 7, p. 18.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 1968, No. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., No. 7, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 19.



glorious, true Communist Party of China<sup>1</sup>, there would be no triumph of the democratic revolution and the socialist revolution in this country, there would be no New China, it would have been impossible to transform our country into a great socialist power and our people would not have been able to always stand upright in the world, marching ever forwards."<sup>2</sup> According to Maoism, the activity of the classes, strata and groups is of importance insofar as it coincides with the instructions of the leader. Today, therefore, the Hungweipings are in the street, tomorrow they are in the countryside; today all Party cadres are beaten up, tomorrow part of them is rehabilitated.

Here it is worth reminding the reader of Engels' vivid words: "All idealists, philosophic and religious, ancient and modern, believe in inspirations, in revelations, saviours, miracle-workers; whether their belief takes a crude religious, or a refined philosophic, form depends only upon their cultural level, just as the degree of energy which they possess, their character, their social position, etc., determine whether their attitude to a belief in miracles is a passive or an active one, i.e., whether they are shepherds performing miracles or whether they are sheep; they further determine whether the aims they pursue are theoretical or practical."<sup>3</sup>

A politician who is not guided in his activity by the thesis that history is made by the masses, by the millions of producers, and that social classes play the decisive role in revolutionary transformation, a politician who is unable, or rather, unwilling to fuse the actions of the individual and the masses, who bases his theoretical and practical activity on the principle that heroes make history according to their whim and fancy, can by no stretch of the imagination be thought of as a Marxist-Leninist.

Thus, Maoist philosophy represents a revision of the materialist view of history, a step backwards to the views of subjective, including populist philosophy long since discredited by Marxism-Leninism.

<sup>1</sup> We have already shown how Mao's ideas have absolutely nothing to do with the emergence of the CPC, and that it was their substitution for the theoretical foundations of the Party that led to the tragedy the CPC is experiencing at the present time.—*M.A., U.G.*

<sup>2</sup> *Jen-min jih-pao*, August 15, 1966.

<sup>3</sup> F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, Moscow, 1964, p. 587.

## 2. The Idealist Answer to the Basic Question of Philosophy

In examining Maoist philosophy we are forced to consider basic question of all philosophy—the relationship between being and thinking. Marx and Engels, in their study of the history of philosophy, showed that "the great basic question of all philosophy, especially of more recent philosophy, is that concerning the relation of thinking and being".<sup>1</sup> Lenin, commenting on Engels' development of this idea, wrote: "In his *Ludwig Feuerbach*, Engels declares that the fundamental philosophical trends are materialism and idealism. Materialism regards nature as primary and spirit as secondary; it places being first and thought second. Idealism holds the contrary view."<sup>2</sup>

If we compare Mao Tse-tung's statements with the statements of the classics of Marxism-Leninism, we might well conclude that Mao simply repeats in his own words various Marxist-Leninist propositions, i.e., that the only difference lies in the manner in which they are expressed. Thus, we can find any number of statements in Mao's works that appear to adhere to the Marxist interpretation of the basic question of philosophy. Let us examine two such statements: "The source of all knowledge lies in the perception through man's physical sense organs of the objective world surrounding him..."<sup>3</sup> "People's social being determines their ideology."<sup>4</sup>

In his *Dialectical Materialism*, which we have already had occasion to mention, Mao Tse-tung repeats, practically word for word, whole passages from Mitin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, published in the USSR in 1933. "The whole history of philosophy is the history of the struggle and development of two mutually opposed schools of philosophy, idealism and materialism."<sup>5</sup> Although Mao goes on to misinterpret the causes of idealism, we nonetheless have this direct admission of the division of philosophy into two

<sup>1</sup> K. Marx, F. Engels, *Selected Works*. In three volumes, Vol. 3, p. 345.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 14, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume One, p. 288.

<sup>4</sup> Mao Tse-tung, "Whence Does a Man Acquire Correct Ideas?"

<sup>5</sup> *Dialectical Materialism*, Talien, p. 1.



camps. He makes an equally open declaration of his support for dialectical materialism. "Wherein lies the main difference between idealism and materialism? It lies in the opposite answer they give to the basic question of philosophy, that of the relationship between spirit and matter (consciousness and being).

"Idealism regards spirit (consciousness, concepts, the subject) as the source of all that exists in the world, and matter (nature and society) as secondary and subordinate. Materialism recognises the independent existence of matter as detached from spirit and considers spirit as secondary and subordinate. The opposite answers to this question are the point of departure of the divergence of views on all other questions."<sup>1</sup>

Leaving aside Mao's oversimplification of such a complicated question, it must be said that the answer he gives is ostensibly materialist.

If we were to judge the above statements at their face value, we should be bound to consider Mao Tse-tung a supporter of dialectical materialism, attribute his errors and false propositions to inconsistency, making allowance for oversimplification on the grounds that it is perhaps inevitable when attempting to present the subject in simple terms that will be comprehensible to all.

In actual fact, however, this is not the case. Maoist philosophy merely masquerades as dialectical materialism, borrowing Marxist-Leninist terminology for the purpose.

Mao needed the thesis that matter is primary and spirit secondary, and that the objective world is the source of perception in order to add weight to his claim to be an orthodox Marxist. In fact there is no substance to these empty declarations. Moreover, by framing his own ideas in the law that "people's social life determines their ideas" and materialising them (every Chinese is having it drummed into him, day in, day out, that Mao Tse-tung's Thought is the be all and end all, the all-determining factor) Mao, aided and abetted by his followers, is in fact departing from the Marxist answer to the basic question of philosophy. It must be said that Mao's followers are far more frank in expounding their views than Mao himself.

<sup>1</sup> *Dialectical Materialism*, Talien, p. 3.

The text-book *Dialectical Materialism*, published by the People's University in 1961, did, it is true, cite Engels' answer to the basic question of philosophy. However, the authors immediately substituted the *question of the relationship between subject and object*, between subjective and objective, for the original question of the relationship between mind and matter. "The basic question of philosophy is by no means a question of pure theory, it is the basic question of cognising and transforming the surrounding world. Essentially, it is the *question of the connection between subjective and objective*. The process of cognisance of the world consists in the reflection of being in thinking, in the reflection of the objective in the subjective; *the process of transforming the world involves the application of thinking to being*, in the subjective's view of the objective."<sup>1</sup> Further on they write: "The question of *what is primary—the subjective or the objective—is the only criterion for differentiation between materialism and idealism*; there can be no other criteria."<sup>2</sup>

The substitution of object for matter and the replacement of the relationship between mind and matter by the relationship between subjective and objective is designed to mask Mao Tse-tung's subjective idealism and eclecticism. In this way the authors erase the distinction between idealism and materialism, for Hegel and the Neo-Thomists also accept the existence of objective reality outside, and independent of, the mind. Besides, the concept of object is by no means limited to the sphere of matter. An object may be of a material or an ideal nature.

This interpretation of the question, no matter how much it is qualified, makes the object dependent on, and conditioned by the subject. The Maoists' revision of the Marxist interpretation of the basic question of philosophy is the point of departure of their subjective idealism, their doctrinairism in philosophy and petty-bourgeois revolutionarism in politics.

The Peking leaders extrapolate from this theory that the transformation of the "objective world" is conditional upon

<sup>1</sup> *Dialectical Materialism*, Peking, pp. 48-49 (emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49 (emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.).



the transformation of the "subjective world", which is a return to pre-Marxian historical idealism. Mao Tse-tung himself is not so explicit on this point, although he applies it in practice, accepting the primacy of the ideological-political factor over material, economic factors.

Mao Tse-tung divorces Marx's thesis that theory can become a material force when it takes hold of the masses from its original context and combines it with his own "thought" that "the Chinese people is a clean sheet of paper", on which "the newest and most beautiful words can be written" and "the newest and most beautiful pictures can be painted".<sup>1</sup>

In "On Contradiction", Mao tries to conceal his subjectivism by emphasising "the reaction of spiritual things on material things", "... We recognise that *in the development of history as a whole* it is material things that determine spiritual things and social existence that determines social consciousness, at the same time we also recognise and must recognise the reaction of spiritual things and social consciousness on social existence, and the reaction of the superstructure on the economic foundation."<sup>2</sup>

Note how the assertion of the primacy of material, social existence is related not to real present-day existence but to history, to the abstract "development of history as a whole", thereby justifying subjectivism in every-day political practice.

Indeed, Mao Tse-tung's next step in justifying his subjectivism was to refer to the thesis that the ideal is frequently the decisive factor of development in concrete reality. It is as a supplement to this thesis that we have the idea of likening the consciousness of the masses to tabula rasa which can be used as the leader sees fit.

With their voluntarist interpretation of the thesis that "the material can be transformed into the spiritual and the spiritual into the material", Mao Tse-tung and his supporters are apparently suggesting that any ideas can be imposed upon society. Hence the preposterous lengths that are gone to to try and impose "Mao Tse-tung's Thought".

Discussing Mao's ideas on the role of the subjective factor,

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, "About One Co-operative Society", *Hungchih*, 1958, No. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Two, p. 41 (emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.).

the authors of the text-book *Dialectical Materialism* adopt a patently subjective-idealist standpoint. Thus, "...the transformation of the world involves a double task: the transformation of the objective world and the transformation of the subjective world".<sup>1</sup> We are told that Mao Tse-tung "creatively developed the principle of the transformation of the subjective world... stressed the tremendous importance of the transformation of the subjective world, political education and *the use of politics as a decisive force*".<sup>2</sup>

"...Before transforming the objective world it is necessary to transform the subjective world, that is, to transform people's ability to understand the objective world, and transform the relations between the subjective world and the objective world."<sup>3</sup> Here the authors are breaking up the compound process of the transformation of man and society and putting the cart before the horse. They are suggesting that the transformation of society and the implementation of revolution must begin with the transformation of man, the transformation of his subjective world, a view which stands in complete contradiction to the Marxist-Leninist principles of historical materialism.

Mao Tse-tung is suggesting that the new man must be created outside the historical conditions in which he lives, and that then this "new man-idea" will transform all social relations and subdue nature according to his own ideal model.

The subjective side of man's activity is absolutised and fetishised, made the main, decisive factor, while the objective side of development, the material conditions in which this process takes place are either declared to be "secondary causes"<sup>4</sup> or ignored altogether.

Maoism thus regards politics, ideas, subjective activity, to be the decisive factor of social development, which means that while paying lip service to dialectical materialism and formally accepting the thesis of the primacy of matter and social being, in practice it treats spiritual things, the ideal, etc., as the primary factor, thereby *adopting what is essentially an idealist standpoint*. Then, in order to mask this

<sup>1</sup> *Dialectical Materialism*, Peking, p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. (emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>4</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Two, p. 15.



subjective-idealist approach to the second side of the basic question of philosophy, namely the problem of the relationship between our knowledge of the world and the objective world, the Maoists substitute the question of the relationship between subject and object for the question of the relation of mind and matter, and the identity of subjective and objective for the identity of thinking and being. Moreover, their treatment of this identity is mechanistic and vulgar. The Maoists are in fact deducing reality from "Mao Tse-tung's Thought", attempting to construct reality according to their own abstract patterns. Lenin's remark that "People repeat slogans, words, war cries, but are afraid to analyse objective reality"<sup>1</sup> fits the Maoists like a glove.

While on the subject, it would be a pity to overlook two further Maoist "contributions" to the basic question of philosophy.

As though aware of their vulnerability in trying to present "Mao Tse-tung's Thought" in materialist garb, the Maoists provide their own "supplement" to the basic question. They hold that in addition to the sides to the basic question mentioned by Engels there is yet another side, the question of the relationship between metaphysics and dialectics. This attempt to supplement the basic question of philosophy was already implicit in Mao's course of lectures "Dialectical Materialism". In the text-book we have been discussing, however, it is quite explicit. "The opposition of outlook between materialism and idealism and their differences also comprise the opposition between dialectics and metaphysics."<sup>2</sup>

There is nothing wrong with the assertion that philosophical views can be divided into metaphysical and dialectical. But it is absurd to suggest that this division corresponds to the division of philosophy into materialist and idealist schools. History is full of examples of materialists who were metaphysicians and idealists who were dialecticians.

The Maoists ignore this. "If we approach this question (the question of opposition between metaphysics and dialectics) as *the basic question*, then rejection of contradictions, refusal to analyse and resolve contradictions, will inevitably lead to our being unable to consistently base ourselves on

objective reality, gain a correct understanding of the world and transform it, and to completely, scientifically solve the question of the relationship between thinking and being."<sup>1</sup>

This "supplement" enables the Maoists to follow the principle of all political charlatans. Whoever disagrees with Chairman Mao's "dialectics" is a metaphysician and thus automatically an idealist, and hence a counter-revolutionary, a member of the "black gang", and it is immediately asked what sort of head he has, a man's or a dog's.

The second Maoist "supplement" to the basic question of philosophy involves the concept of philosophy as a specific form of social consciousness and its role in the general progress of mankind.

Marxism-Leninism regards philosophy in terms of world view, as a science that reveals the more general laws of development of nature, society and human knowledge. The founders of Marxism stressed the connection between Marxist philosophy and the revolutionary practice of the working class and insisted on the distinction between philosophy and practice, theory and practice, condemning outright the mechanistic practice of deducing practical questions from general philosophical propositions. But this is just what the Maoists do. They try to extract a solution to all practical problems up to and including the curing of the deaf-and-dumb from general philosophic principles. The French journalist J. E. Vidal, whom we have already mentioned, wrote that "Maoism is theorising detached from historical reality. This is not Marxism. Mao Tse-tung, with his abstract outlook, gives directions that no longer correspond to historical reality. *The Chinese cadres, even the most out-and-out Maoists, at first, when called upon to put the doctrines into practice, and later when they come up against the hard facts of reality, tend to become anti-Maoists, because the doctrine is impracticable.... Maoism... is refuted by practice.... Its existence presupposes constant suppression of the opposition which is produced by its inherent contradiction between theory and practice, utopia and reality.*"<sup>2</sup>

Mao Tse-tung began to identify theory with practice back in the forties. "Our revolutionary practice," he wrote, "is a

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Dialectical Materialism*, Peking, p. 54.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 55 (emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.).

<sup>2</sup> *L'humanité*, January 10, 1968 (emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.).



science which is known as social or political science, and unless we understand dialectics we shall not be very successful."<sup>1</sup> Later, Mao tries to "free philosophy and dialectics from mysticism". "We also hear it said that dialectics are so profound and difficult as to be quite beyond the ordinary person. This is also untrue. Dialectics contain laws of nature, society and thought, so that *anybody with some social experience (experience of production or the class struggle) can understand something of dialectics and the more social experience he has the better he will understand dialectics.*"<sup>2</sup>

Identifying direct personal experience with theory, in this case dialectics, the Maoists go on to declare that "the basic question of philosophy is at the same time the basic question of practical work",<sup>3</sup> and even go as far as to say that the basic question is the transformation of the material world.<sup>4</sup>

The "greatest philosopher" of all time, as Mao is described by the Peking propaganda machine, shows an understanding of the true nature of philosophy at the level of those Philistine views which were scorned by Hegel. Mao not only identifies theory with practice; he even denies theoretical knowledge its true status, reducing it to the level of common-sense assertions.

The reader is reminded that Hegel, writing in the first half of the nineteenth century, came much closer to a scientific understanding of the true essence of philosophical knowledge than Mao Tse-tung does with his "original" interpretation in the mid-twentieth century. Hegel wrote: "There is a difference between having such feelings and notions *defined* and permeated by *thought* and having *thoughts about them*. The thoughts produced through *consideration* of these modes of perception are what is meant by reflection, reasoning and the like, and also philosophy."<sup>5</sup> Hegel poked fun at those who are wont to philosophise whenever given the slightest opportunity. "This science is often so scorned that even those who have never had any-

<sup>1</sup> *Dialectical Materialism*, Talien, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39 (emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), Berlin, 1966, pp. 34-35.

thing to do with it imagine that they understand what philosophy is all about without studying it at all, and that having a normal education and drawing especially on religious feeling they can philosophise and make judgements on philosophy as they please. In the case of other sciences special knowledge is considered necessary to know them and only those who have acquired such a knowledge have the right to judge them. It is also agreed that in order to make a boot it is necessary to have learnt and practised the cobbler's trade, although every man has a measure for it in his foot, and has hands and thanks to them the necessary natural ability for the job. It is only philosophy that requires no such study, learning and effort. This convenient attitude has found confirmation in recent times in the teaching on direct knowledge, knowledge through observation."<sup>1</sup>

Let us now compare the attitudes of Hegel and Mao Tse-tung on the matter of the "unintelligibility" of philosophy. Hegel writes: "Philosophy combines views, thoughts, categories, or to be more precise, *concepts*. Views can generally be regarded as *metaphors* of thoughts and concepts. But having attitudes, we still do not know their meaning for thought, the thoughts and concepts that underlie them. Conversely, it is not the same to have thoughts and concepts and to know what attitudes, meditations and feelings correspond to them. This, partly, is what gives rise to what is called the unintelligibility of philosophy."<sup>2</sup> "*The most intelligible* are thus considered to be the writers, preachers and orators, etc., who expound to their listeners things which the latter already know by heart, which they are used to and which are *self-evident*."<sup>3</sup> Hegel's witty remarks are devastatingly applicable to Lin Piao's vulgarising statements to the effect that "constant reading of extracts from the works of Chairman Mao, and even better learning them by heart brings immediate, tangible results." In his foreword to *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, Lin Piao writes: "Selective study of extracts from the works of Chairman Mao Tse-tung in search of the key to the solution of various problems is an excellent method of studying the works of Mao Tse-tung, with the aid of which it is easy to obtain immediate,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



tangible results.”<sup>1</sup> This is simply making a dogma of individual statements by Mao Tse-tung and attributing them with miraculous powers. All you have to do is pray, read aloud a quotation, or better, chant it, and you will obtain “immediate, tangible results”.

What has this got to do with revolutionary, creative Marxism? And how, indeed, does it differ from religion, from psalm-singing and so on? The worshippers of “the greatest and most vital Marxism of our age” who have not even read what they extol might be reminded of what Engels had to say about Marxism. “Our theory is not a dogma but the exposition of a process of evolution, and that process involves successive phases.”<sup>2</sup> And again: “Our theory is a theory of evolution, not a dogma to be learnt by heart and to be repeated mechanically.”<sup>3</sup>

Lin Piao’s “idea” of the need to stack quotations from Mao Tse-tung was met with mockery even within China on the part of educated people who had derived their understanding of Marxism-Leninism not from collections of quotations but from studying the classics of Marxism-Leninism and the experience of the revolutionary movement in China and other countries, above all the experience of the October Revolution in Russia. The Rector of Hsian University, Chen Kang, was reported in the Chinese press to have remarked in connection with the campaign for the study of Mao’s philosophy: “If I don’t know how to pole-vault, the fact that I am read a few quotations from the works of Chairman Mao will not make me any more able to do so.” The Maoists regarded this as a denial of the effectiveness of the thoughts of Mao and the thesis that they bring “immediate, tangible results”.

When Chinese geologists aided by Hungarian specialists found a large oil deposit at Taching, the discovery was hailed as “a great victory of the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung”. Yang Hsien-chen, whom we have already mentioned, declared that it was necessary to respect the principles of materialism, that “unless the specialists and workers had made a careful study of the geological structure of the strata, unless thorough investigations had been made, the Taching

oilmen would not have achieved such remarkable success”.

However, such statements as these, criticising the way the achievements of the Chinese people are being ascribed to the “Thoughts of Mao” were given a very hostile reception by the Maoists, and their authors found themselves excluded from the political and theoretical life of the Chinese People’s Republic.

As Lenin wrote, “You cannot have a proper understanding of any mistake, let alone a political one, unless you dig down to its theoretical roots among the basic premises of the one who makes it.”<sup>1</sup> This is an essential principle of Marxism-Leninism in the investigation of any philosophical system, of any ideological error.

The roots of the theoretical errors of Mao Tse-tung are to be sought above all in the *absolutisation of the subjective factor and a corresponding depreciation of the role of material, economic factors* in the development of society. This is due to the limited nature of the ideological-theoretical, philosophical views underlying Mao’s outlook. Claiming to be the author of a “universal philosophy” of general truths, Mao misinterprets the experience of the class struggle in China. His talk of “production struggle” and scientific experiment can be discounted, since we find no hint in his works of his deductions being even vaguely based on any real facts of the development of the economy and the productive forces, and no mention at all of the development of science and recent scientific discoveries.

With their poor grasp of economics and their ignorance of the achievements of modern science, it is perhaps only natural that the Maoists should stake all their hopes for the solution of China’s problems on the subjective factor, understood as the “thoughts of Mao”.

While accepting the thesis that “thinking is the reflection of being” *historically*, Maoism completely ignores it *in practice*, on the excuse that “when theory takes hold of the masses it becomes a material force”, and that the political superstructure has a strong reverse influence on being, and the economic basis.

The Maoists maintain that great disasters overtake the masses as soon as they depart from the designs of Chairman

<sup>1</sup> *Quotations from Mao Tse-tung’s Works* (in Russian), p. III.

<sup>2</sup> K. Marx, F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1965, p. 399.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 400.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 90.



Mao, and that the main source of strength is faith in the "absolute authority of the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung".

Maoist philosophy, asserting the decisive role of the subjective factor, has been proclaimed the philosophy of "revolutionary enthusiasm".

The Chinese Marxists spoke out against this philosophy of revolutionary enthusiasm. Yang Hsien-chen countered the Maoist thesis of the "identity of thinking and being" and "the transformation of the ideal into the material" with the thesis of the "unity of thinking and being". A Maoist, one Feng Chi, attacked him for this. "At the time when the enthusiasm of the masses has risen to an unprecedented height, and they have entered heart and soul into the fire of revolutionary struggle, 'theoreticians' are waving a book at them and fervently propagating the passive theory of reflection. . . . Yang Hsien-chen, denying the role of subjective activity, stresses so-called 'respect for the principles of materialism'."<sup>1</sup>

But Yang Hsien-chen himself maintains that "the premise that matter determines mind is recognition of the active role of mind".<sup>2</sup> In answer to the Maoist attempt to prove the realism and correctness of their adventurist policy by dogmatically quoting excerpts from the classics of Marxism-Leninism and to Mao Tse-tung's statement that "politics is the ruling force" Yang insists that thought, and politics as one of its forms, "should correspond to the demands of reality."

Probing the gnoseological roots of Maoist idealism, Yang Hsien-chen writes: "The idea of the unity of thinking and being is dialectical materialism, whereas the idea of the identity of thinking and being is idealism or vulgar materialism."<sup>3</sup> He goes on to explain: "The unity of thinking and being is the demand that thinking should be a correct reflection of being, that the subjective should accurately reflect the objective; unity here is to be understood as 'correspondence'."<sup>4</sup>

We are bound to agree with Yang Hsien-chen's criticism of Maoism. As Engels wrote: "To attempt to prove the real-

ity of any product of thought by the identity of thinking and being was indeed one of the most absurd delirious phantasies of Hegel."<sup>1</sup>

Yet it is "delirious phantasies" such as this that form the underlying methodological principles of Maoist philosophy, albeit masked in fine phrases about the role of the subjective factor, the "philosophy of revolutionary enthusiasm" and so on.

Thus, *absolutisation* of the subjective factor and an unflexible *one-sided* interpretation of the transformation of the spiritual into the material, the practice of making "the thoughts of Mao" a source of development from which practical policy is derived, the *deification* of Mao Tse-tung and the *ascribing of magic powers to him and his statements*—such are the gnoseological, theoretical roots of the idealism and eclecticism of Maoism.

<sup>1</sup> *Jiefang jih-pao*, August 30, 1964.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Guang-ming jih-pao*, September 11, 1964.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow, 1969, p. 57.



# ECLECTICISM POSING AS DIALECTICS. MAO TSE-TUNG'S DISTORTION OF THE BASIC LAW OF DIALECTICS

The Chinese philosophical review *Chieh-hsüeh yan-chiu* describes Mao Tse-tung's "contribution" to materialist dialectics as follows: "Comrade Mao Tse-tung said that the law of the unity and struggle of opposites is the basic law of the world. Developing Lenin's teaching on the essence of dialectics, Mao Tse-tung proved that the law of the unity and struggle of opposites is the basic law of materialist dialectics. Mao Tse-tung showed the inner relationship between the law of the unity and struggle of opposites and other laws of dialectical materialism. By creatively and comprehensively revealing the essence of the law of the unity and struggle of opposites, Comrade Mao Tse-tung raised the Marxist-Leninist doctrine to a new level. This is Comrade Mao Tse-tung's great contribution to Marxist-Leninist philosophy."<sup>1</sup> The article goes on to declare the Maoist "dialectics" an instrument of cognition of the world and of revolutionary struggle.

The Maoist claim that Mao was the first to point to the law of the unity and struggle of opposites as the basic law of materialist dialectics is completely unfounded. It is well known that Lenin repeatedly insisted on this point, as for example in the following statement. "In brief, dialectics can be defined as the doctrine of the unity of opposites. This embodies the essence of dialectics, but it requires explanations and development."<sup>2</sup> "The splitting of a single whole and the cognition of its contradictory parts... is the essence (one of the "essentials", one of the principal, if not the principal

<sup>1</sup> *Chieh-hsüeh yan-chiu*, 1966, No. 2, pp. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 223.

characteristics or features) of dialectics."<sup>1</sup> This idea was to be found in Soviet philosophy manuals of the early thirties.<sup>2</sup>

The Maoist claims that Mao Tse-tung contributed to the development of the law of the unity of opposites are likewise totally unwarranted. In actual fact, here as elsewhere, Mao is simply repeating a Marxist premise, though in a grossly distorted manner. Here are a couple of quotations from Mao Tse-tung, by way of illustration. "The interdependence of the contradictory aspects of a thing and the struggle between them determine the life and impel the development of that thing. There is nothing that does not contain contradiction; without contradiction there would be no world."<sup>3</sup> "Contradiction is universal, absolute, existing in all processes of the development of things and running through all processes from beginning to end."<sup>4</sup>

The recognition of the fact that contradiction impels development was a basic principle of Marxist thought from the outset, and Mao Tse-tung has added nothing here.

Mao goes on to say that "...first, each of the two aspects of every contradiction in the process of development of a thing finds the presupposition of its existence in the other aspect and both aspects coexist in an entity; second, each of the two contradictory aspects, according to given conditions, tends to transform itself into the other."<sup>5</sup> This is also discussed quite frequently in the works of the classics of Marxism-Leninism.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, Mao writes that "the unity of opposites is conditional, temporary and relative, while the struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute"<sup>7</sup>, which is a repetition,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, Part I ("Dialectical Materialism"), Moscow, 1935, pp. 140, 147 (in Russian).

<sup>3</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Two, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, Lenin wrote: "Dialectics is the teaching which shows how opposites can be and how they happen to be (how they become) identical—under what conditions they are identical, becoming transformed into one another—why the human mind should grasp these opposites not as dead, rigid, but as living, conditional, mobile, becoming transformed into one another." *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 109.

<sup>7</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Two, p. 48.



practically word for word, of a well-known thesis of Lenin's.<sup>1</sup>

In "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People", published in 1957, Mao Tse-tung gives the following short exposition of the law of the unity and conflict of opposites. "Marxist philosophy regards the law of the unity and conflict of opposites as the basic law of the universe. This law operates universally in nature, human society and the human mind. The opposite sides of a contradiction coexist in unity and struggle, and this impels the movement and change of things and phenomena. Contradictions exist everywhere and the fact that they are different in character simply depends on the nature of different things and phenomena. The unity of opposites is conditioned, temporary and transient for every concrete thing (phenomenon) and hence relative, while the struggle of opposites is absolute. *Lenin spoke very clearly of this law.*" (Emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.)

None of the above quotations from Mao Tse-tung can be said to contradict Marxist theses. But then they are not Mao's own original statements but simply the repetition in simplified terms of statements from the classics of Marxism-Leninism, and above all Lenin. This does not, however, mean that Mao Tse-tung adopts a Marxist standpoint in his understanding of the laws of materialist dialectics in general, or the law of the unity and conflict of opposites in particular. In explaining them in simple terms he frequently expresses non-Marxist views. This is not always immediately apparent, firstly because they appear in association with well-known correct theses from the classics of Marxism-Leninism, and secondly because they are phrased in Marxist language. With regard to the latter, it can be said that there the resemblance of the Maoist dialectics to Marxism-Leninism ends.

As for Mao's "development" of materialist dialectics which his supporters harp on about, this proves to be nothing more than a reversion to the naive dialectics of the ancient Chinese, and distortion or outright revision of Marxist dialectics. We have already mentioned that Mao Tse-tung has a very hazy notion of the spiritual and cultural

values of other countries. This explains his nihilistic attitude towards them, his vulgarisation of world philosophical traditions.<sup>1</sup> Maoist dialectics are a peculiar Chinese brand of dialectics, for they are based almost entirely on the national philosophical tradition and ignore many of the finest achievements of world philosophy.

If we turn to Chinese philosophy we shall see the idea of opposite principles in nature and society running through its entire history; moreover, this idea has been defended by representatives of various ideological trends.

There are references to pairs of opposites and their mutual interpenetration and passing into one another in the ancient Taoist treatise *Tao Te Ching* (The Way of Life). These views contain dialectical ideas in embryo form. "Transformation of a thing into its opposite is the movement of the Tao." "Since there is beauty there is ugliness too. Man's goodness is attended by his wickedness. For is and is not come together. Hard and easy create one another; long and short are relative; high and low are comparative; pitch and sound make harmony; before and after are a sequence." "In order to make a thing yield it is necessary to strengthen it. In order to destroy something it is necessary to first let it prosper..." A similar view was held, fifteen centuries later, by the materialist Chang Tsai, who wrote: "Two opposites—the invisible and the visible, movement and rest, integration and disintegration, clean and dirty—yet in the long run are all one and the same."<sup>2</sup> "...As a phenomenon occurs, so its counterpart occurs. The other member of the pair must be its opposite. As there is opposition, so there is hostility. Hostility inevitably ends in reconciliation, and thus the hostility is resolved."<sup>3</sup>

We find the same idea of pairing things in nature and society in the works of Chang Tsai's contemporaries, the Cheng brothers. Thus, Cheng Hao writes: "The principle inherent

<sup>1</sup> For one thing Mao identifies mechanistic, metaphysical materialism with vulgar evolutionism. He paints a completely black picture of metaphysical materialism, failing to recognise that it represented a step forward in the development of philosophical knowledge, and was at one time the ideology of the progressive bourgeoisie. See *Selected Works*, Volume Two, pp. 13-16.

<sup>2</sup> Wang Chuang-shan, *Meditations and Questions* (in Chinese), Peking, 1956, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>1</sup> See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 359.



in things and phenomena consists in that nothing is isolated but everything is dual; the pairs are not pre-established but occur naturally. . . . All things and phenomena without exception have the counterpart—the male and female principle, good and evil. When the male principle grows the female decreases, when the (quantity of) good increases, the (quantity of) evil decreases—this is the principle.”<sup>1</sup> Chu Hsi, who reinterpreted Confucianism and raised it to the level of the official doctrine of the feudal-imperial power in China, also expressed similar ideas. “East—West, up—down, winter—summer, day—night, birth—death, all these are pairs of opposites. The phenomena of nature only exist in pairs.”<sup>2</sup>

The seventeenth-century philosopher Wang Chuang-shan wrote: “The invisible must inevitably become visible, the visible contains the invisible, and in the long run it is all one. When something appears, the invisible is here and the visible there. . . . And in the long run it is all one. Gathering is gathering of that which is dispersed, and dispersal is the dispersal of that which is gathered, and it is all one. That which is clean can become dirty and that which is dirty always contains clean elements, and it is all one. Two opposites are used together, creating opposite phenomena. Each essence has two manifestations. Thus, water has one essence, but turns to ice when it is cold and to steam when it is hot; the differences between ice and steam are sufficient to know the definite essence of water.”<sup>3</sup>

The theory of two opposite forces, the Yang and the Yin, representing the masculine and feminine principles combined in the Chi, original matter, remained of great importance in Chinese philosophy right down to modern times.

One of the major materialist philosophers of ancient China, Wang Chung (27-104) said: “All things are born of the union of the parts of Chi, heaven and earth, just as a child is born of the union of the parts of Chi, man and woman.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Huang Tsung-hsi, *Works of Sages of the Sung and Yuan Periods* (in Chinese), Vol. I, part 5, Shanghai, 1933, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Yü Tung, *Basic Problems of Chinese Philosophy* (in Chinese), Peking, 1958, p. 139.

<sup>3</sup> Wang Chuang-shan, “Comment on Chang Tsai’s Instructions for the Unenlightened” (in Chinese), Peking, 1956, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> *Anthology of World Philosophy*, Vol. I, Part I, Section on Chinese Philosophy, Mysl Publishers, Moscow, 1969, pp. 244-45 (in Russian).

“The heaven and earth are like unto man and woman.”<sup>1</sup> Chu Hsi held the same view: “Originally between sky and earth there was only Chi, consisting of the soft Yin and the hard Yang.”<sup>2</sup> The relationship between the two opposite forces expressed in a strict system of mutual engendering and supercession of one another was regarded as the universal law of existence. Many Chinese philosophers held that the correlation of the Yang and the Yin was the basis of the mutual engendering and mutual defining of the five original elements constituting matter, and with the aid of this dualist system sought to explain the cause of movement and the process of change and transformation in nature. The theory embodied the view that all things and phenomena were universally related. This view was an essential part of Chinese philosophy, and especially materialist trends, right down to the 1920s, and it was shared by Sun Yat-sen.

These cosmological conceptions also had a strong influence in shaping Mao’s ideas at the formative stage, and this explains why he is so fond of backing up various theories with references to the relationship between the sky and the earth. Suffice it to recall his expression “The sky will not collapse and fish will go on swimming.”

This also explains why of all the laws of materialist dialectics it was the law of the unity and conflict of opposites that attracted Mao’s attention most. This is the source of his famous “theory of duality” advanced in 1957.

In speaking of materialist dialectics Mao makes frequent references to the ancient Chinese philosophers, especially Lao Tzu and the heroes of the novel *Water Margin*. But the dialectical ideas developed by the Chinese philosophers of the past were schematic and naive, and never found expression in a general ontological law. The Chinese philosophers tend to treat these interpenetrating opposites somewhat superficially and in isolation. The opposites are essentially separate from one another in time and space, and their transformation into one another is not so much a dialectical process as a series of outward, superficial changes and interchanges. Development is treated as cyclical, the alternation of the Yang and Yin, movement and rest, and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.



pairs of opposites characterised the supercession of the old by the new.

The Chinese philosophers did not go beyond a statement of the fact that opposites exist in nature and that they supercede one another. One looks in vain for an explanation of the causes or content of the process or for theories of the identity of opposites. Hence their failure to explain the transformation of things into their opposite. For all his use of Marxist terminology and frequent recourse to quotations from Lenin, Mao Tse-tung's understanding of opposites in nature has remained basically at the level of naive dialectics.

To begin with, while recognising the conflict of opposites, Mao does not reveal the true essence of the process. His speech to a meeting of the Politburo of the CPC Central Committee held in Uchang on December 1, 1958, which the Maoists are so fond of referring to is worthy of citation in this respect. "Just as all objects and phenomena in the world have duality (this is the essence of the law of the unity of opposites), imperialism and all reactionaries also have duality—they are both real and paper tigers. History shows that before winning power and for a short time after they had seized it, slave-owners, feudal landlords, and the bourgeoisie were active, revolutionary, and progressive classes, representing real tigers. Later, as the slaves, the peasantry and the proletariat—classes representing their opposites—gradually grew and waxed in strength and waged an ever fiercer struggle against them, the slave-owners, the feudal landlords and the bourgeoisie underwent a reaction: they became reactionary, backward classes, became paper tigers, and in the end were, or shall be, overthrown by the people...."

If we ignore for the time being Mao's use of the term "real and paper tigers", it is clear that he does not really go beyond a formal acceptance of the law of the unity and conflict of opposites and does not reveal the inner mechanism by which it operates. Slave-owners, the feudal landowners and the bourgeoisie did indeed cease to be the bearers of social progress in the course of historical development, and were gradually replaced in this role by more progressive classes. But to say this is to say nothing, for to simply state the facts of socio-historical development falls short of

historical dialectics. The Marxist theoretician—which Mao's supporters would have us believe Mao to be—must reveal the dialectic of the process by which one class supercedes another, since knowledge of the causes of movement and development of antagonistic societies provides the basis for constructive activity for the revolutionary transformation of the world.

The concomitance and mutual exclusiveness of opposites is determined by their dialectical nature. Opposites are interpenetrating, so that the slave-owners, the feudal lords and the bourgeoisie were pregnant with their opposites—the slaves, the peasantry and the proletariat—from the outset. The unity of these opposites lies in the fact that they are concomitant and mutually exclusive and this unity can only be eliminated by destroying its underlying causes—antagonistic society. In other words, this unity is destroyed in the course of the class struggle and social revolution.

Mao Tse-tung treats contradiction as a mechanistic, outward opposition, as can be seen from the following. "Without life, there would be no death; without death there would also be no life. Without 'above', there would be no 'below', without 'below' there would also be no 'above'. Without misfortune, there would be no good fortune; without good fortune, there would also be no misfortune. Without facility, there would be no difficulty; without difficulty, there would also be no facility. Without landlords, there would be no tenant-peasants; without tenant-peasants, there would also be no landlords. Without the bourgeoisie, there would be no proletariat; without a proletariat there would also be no bourgeoisie. Without imperialist oppression of the nations, there would be no colonies or semi-colonies; without colonies or semi-colonies, there would also be no imperialist oppression of the nations. All opposite elements are like this..."<sup>1</sup>

Even if we ignore the fact that this is practically word for word repetition of one of Lao Tzu's theses, we must still note that Mao is treating contradiction as a mechanistic contrast between outward opposites. Mao frequently uses such terms as "good—evil", "hot—cold" and so on for these opposites, and it must be said that while such propositions

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Two, pp. 43-44.



were justified two thousand years ago when the idea of contradictions of objective being and human thought was first being advanced, in the twentieth century, in the light of present-day scientific knowledge, this just is not enough. Scientific dialectics must reveal the inner contradictions inherent in objects and show the real process of the development of phenomena consisting of two opposites. In other words, it must analyse the self-movement of a given phenomenon.

The term "good—bad" applied to these opposites by Mao is insufficient to give a correct impression of the complex, contradictory processes by which nature and society develop. It is not only that these terms cannot be said to have a precise, invariable meaning. More important is the fact that Mao uses them for the purpose of reinforcing his distorted interpretation of social processes and covering up his policy failures. He declares counter-revolutionary disturbances in the socialist countries to be "good" as serving to strengthen the new social system; likewise the death of a large number of people in social revolutions, as bringing closer the victory of the people; or a new world war, since it would, in his opinion, make possible the destruction of capitalism. This kind of "dialectics" has the same relationship to Marxism-Leninism as alchemy has to chemistry.

A purely mechanistic unity of obvious contrasts is simply a vulgarisation and distortion of scientific dialectics. Nor can all obvious opposites be said to represent two sides of the same thing, two sides of a single phenomenon or process. For example, the bourgeoisie (commercial, middleman, bureaucratic) in many developing countries can exist without a proletariat, the proletariat can exist without the bourgeoisie in socialist society, and the feudal landowner can exist without the tenant-farmer.

As Engels wrote: "True, so long as we consider things as at rest and lifeless, each one by itself, alongside and after each other, we do not run up against any contradictions in them. We find certain qualities which are partly common to, partly different from, and even contradictory to each other, but which in the last-mentioned case are distributed among different objects and therefore contain no contradiction within. Inside the limits of this sphere of observation we can get along on the basis of the usual, meta-

physical mode of thought. But the position is quite different as soon as we consider things in their motion, their change, their life, their reciprocal influence on one another. Then we immediately become involved in contradictions."<sup>1</sup>

Mao Tse-tung understands the interdependence and reciprocal influence of opposites mechanistically. He writes that opposites are transformed into one another, but he understands their mutual supercession and interpenetration simply as changing places, as when the oppressed peasant, for example, takes the place of the landowner when he triumphs, and the landowner, after the defeat of his class, takes the peasant's place. According to Mao, the same thing happens after the triumph of socialist revolution: "the proletariat, once the ruled, becomes the ruler, while the bourgeoisie, originally the ruler, becomes the ruled, and is transferred to the position originally occupied by its opposite. This has already taken place in the Soviet Union and will take place throughout the world."<sup>2</sup>

Thus Mao appears to be suggesting that as a result of the triumph of the socialist revolution, the exploited (the workers) become the exploiters, and the exploiters (the capitalists) become the exploited class ("is transferred to the position originally occupied by its opposite"), which is patently absurd.

Mao is reported by the Hungweiping press to have declared at a meeting that "the oppressors and the oppressed are transformed into one another; such is the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the landowners on the one hand and the workers and peasants on the other". He thus exchanges gradual, stage-by-stage development for a cycle with the repetition of one and the same. One cannot help being reminded of the cyclic theory of Chinese naive dialectics.<sup>3</sup>

Mao Tse-tung understands the transformation of things and phenomena into their opposites perfectly literally. In actual fact, the picture is far more complicated. Each thing or phenomenon represents the sum and unity of opposites,

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, Moscow, 1966, pp. 232-33.

<sup>2</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Two, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Mao Tse-tung criticises Hegel in his works, and yet Hegel presented the problem of opposites and their transformation into one another far more fully and profoundly than Mao.



but one side of the contradiction is always subordinate to the other. The following passage from Marx examines this point. "Proletariat and wealth are opposites; as such they form a single whole. They are both forms of the world of private property. The question is what place each occupies in the antithesis. It is not sufficient to declare them two sides of a single whole.

"Private property as private property, as wealth, is compelled to maintain *itself*, and thereby its opposite, the proletariat, in *existence*. That is the *positive* side of the contradiction, self-satisfied private property.

"The proletariat, on the other hand, is compelled as proletariat to abolish itself and thereby its opposite, the condition for its existence, what makes it the proletariat, i.e., private property. That is the *negative* side of the contradiction, its restlessness within its very self, dissolved and self-dissolving private property. . . .

"Within this antithesis the private property owner is therefore the *conservative* side, the proletarian, the *destructive* side. From the former arises the action of preserving the antithesis, from the latter, that of annihilating it."<sup>1</sup>

Unlike Mao Tse-tung, Marx goes beyond a mere recognition of the conflict of opposites as the cause of development to reveal the mechanism of the conflict. Mao Tse-tung fails to grasp the main point, the fact that the conflict of opposites inevitably becomes progressively more acute until it comes to a head and the result is the solution of the given contradiction, its "removal" and the appearance of a new one, the old unity of concrete opposites giving way to a new unity of different concrete opposites. It is a qualitative change that takes place, and not simply a swapping of places. The proletariat does not become the bourgeoisie, but a qualitative change occurs in the historical role of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as opposites. At some point the bourgeoisie loses its progressive role to the proletariat. This is what makes inevitable the defeat of the bourgeoisie and the triumph of the proletariat, the struggle between them eventually leading to the disruption of their inner links and the annihilation of this particular unity of opposites, with capitalism giving way to socialism.

<sup>1</sup> K. Marx, F. Engels, *The Holy Family*, Moscow, 1956, p. 51.

"When the proletariat is victorious, it by no means becomes the absolute side of society, for it is victorious only by abolishing itself and its opposite. Then the proletariat disappears as well as the opposite which determines it, private property."<sup>1</sup>

Mao Tse-tung erases the qualitative differences involved. Lenin said that flexibility of concepts where applied subjectively was tantamount of eclecticism and sophistry. By this definition Mao is certainly a sophist. As an example of his sophistry let us examine his statements that "War is transformed into peace. . . . Peace is transformed into war. . . ." <sup>2</sup> and "War passes into peace and peace passes into war. Peace is the opposite of war. If there was no war, how could we have the word 'peace'?" <sup>3</sup>

War and peace are certainly opposite concepts, and when one starts the other ceases. But this does not make them opposites of the same phenomenon, mutually determining. Mao Tse-tung, on the basis of his over-simplified, Philistine understanding of these two phenomena as mutually opposed, regards them as social opposites expressing the essence of social development. According to this logic the alternation of peace and war is an inevitable result of the self-development of the contradictory sides of the social organism. In actual fact, however, war and peace are not two sides of a single phenomenon but two different forms of political relations between states. The outbreak of war is determined not by the development of peace as a form of inter-state relations but by the contradictions inherent in the nature of capitalist society. Mao's "explanation" of the transition from war to peace and vice versa is simply a further demonstration of the poverty of his "dialectics".

Mao examines the law of the unity and conflict of opposites without reference to the relationship between the categories of possibility and reality, whereas in fact the solution of any contradiction is clearly inseparable from the transformation of the possible into the actual, since the solution of a contradiction and the transformation of possibility into reality are two sides of the same process of de-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Two, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> From a Hungweiping newspaper.



velopment. The existence of possibility is determined by the inherent contradictions between objects and phenomena. A new world war is a possibility in present-day conditions, but the existence of this possibility does not necessarily mean that it will become a reality.

The possible only becomes actual as the result of the struggle and triumph of one opposite over another, and this depends on the quantitative and qualitative differences between the possibilities of the given opposites. Thus, if at one time the forces of war had a far greater possibility of triumphing than did those of peace, today the position has been reversed. The combined strength of the countries of the socialist community, the international labour and national liberation movements is sufficient to prevent the imperialists from resorting to war as a means of solving international disputes, and mankind is in a position to banish war as a form of international political relations.

Thus, war and peace being two quite different social phenomena, Mao's assertion about the inevitable alternation of war and peace fails to reveal their true essence.

The practical activity of the Maoists in the world arena during the last decade or so shows that Mao's exercises with the problem of war and peace are patently political in character and are called upon to justify the policy of unleashing a new world war.

Mao Tse-tung evades the question of leaps forward in social development, a question that is of great importance. Marxist dialectics hold that the development of the conflict of opposites eventually leads to a qualitative change in the form of a leap forward. Thus, the struggle between the landowners and the peasants, and indeed the whole struggle between exploited and exploiters leads to a leap forward in social development and the replacement of one social system with another. The cause of this leap forward is to be sought in the inner contradictions, the conflict of opposite trends arising in the process of development of a social formation such as capitalism.

Apart from distorting the law of the unity and conflict of opposites, Mao completely ignores two other fundamental laws of dialectics, so that his theory of development is incomplete and truncated, for it deals only with the cause

of development but fails to examine how it operates or its prospects.

At the same time Mao declares contradiction the only form of relationship between objects and phenomena. This approach places all the emphasis on the external aspect of the question, lumps together all kinds of different relations thereby concealing the real contradictions that determine the inner life, self-movement and development of an object or phenomenon. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Mao should launch into an earnest discussion of the problem of the contradictions between a stone and a chicken, and between a stone and war. "Why can only an egg be transformed into a chicken but not a stone? Why is there identity between war and peace and none between war and a stone? Why can human beings give birth only to human beings but not to anything else?"<sup>1</sup>

Engels had the following to say on this subject. "Two different things always have certain qualities (properties of corporeality at least) in common, others differing in degree, while still others may be entirely absent in one of them. If we consider two such extremely different things—e.g., a meteorite and a man—in separation, we get very little out of it, at most that heaviness and other general properties of bodies are common to both."<sup>2</sup>

Instead of revealing and analysing real contradictions actually existing in life, Mao Tse-tung engages in a sophist game of artificially producing contradictions by contrasting various phenomena formally. Mao regards dialectics as the sum of examples often chosen at random. In a speech at a meeting in 1958 he declared: "Limited things pass into boundless things, and boundless things pass into things with limits. The dialectics of ancient times passed into medieval metaphysics, and medieval metaphysics passed into the dialectics of modern times. The world is also in a process of transition and is not eternal. Capitalism passes into socialism, and socialism passes into communism. Communist society too will be in a process of transition, and will have its beginning and an end, and will certainly be divided into stages, or a new name will be invented for it; it will

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Two, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> F. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, pp. 232-33.



not remain static and unchanging. To maintain that there will be only quantity and not quality is contrary to dialectics. There is nothing in the world but that it is born, develops and perishes. The ape became man and people appeared, but eventually the whole of mankind must perish. It will turn into something else and the earth will no longer exist. The earth is bound eventually to perish. The sun is already much cooler than it was in ancient times. Once every two million years an Ice Age begins, and when it comes living things will perish en masse. . . . I am mentioning all this in order to remove the fetters from our thinking and enable us to think more freely."

The above passage reflects all the defects of the Maoist dialectics. Firstly, the transition of one thing into another is treated simply as a change of places; secondly, development is understood not as the negation of the old by the new, but simply as repetition of what has already been, as a circular or regressive movement. Consequently, there are no grounds for assuming, as the Maoists claim, that Mao Tse-tung has "shown the inner link between the law of the unity and conflict of opposites and other laws of dialectical materialism". In fact Mao fails to grasp the true essence of the law of the transition of quantitative changes into qualitative changes, and ignores the law of the negation of a negation, which reveals the general direction of development.

Mao frequently reduces the problem of contradictions to its everyday and even Philistine level, treating the basic law of dialectics in a vulgar, primitive manner, as in the following statement, reported in the Hungweiping press. "The son becomes the father, the father becomes a son, woman becomes man and man becomes woman. Naturally a direct change is impossible here, but after marriage sons and daughters are born, and is not this a transition?"

Such theoretical exercises do not take us a single step forward in the study of the complex interrelationships that exist in nature and society. The dialectic is turned into a collection of truisms. Take the following passage for example. "We must learn to take an all-sided view of questions, and not only see the front side of things and phenomena but also their reverse side. In certain circumstances bad may produce good results and good may produce bad results.

Lao Tzu said over two thousand years ago: 'Happiness abides in misfortune, and misfortune abides in happiness.'"<sup>1</sup>

There is nothing new in what Mao says here, for it has been known to the Chinese peasants for centuries and found expression in all kinds of proverbs and sayings. For example, after a series of unsuccessful attempts, Chinese peasants find the most rational way of planting rice. Naturally, the peasants can say that bad (failure) has led to a good result, thereby expressing their understanding of the various stages of the labour process. But Mao Tse-tung would have us regard this as a great achievement of dialectical thought.

Underlying Mao's vulgarisation of dialectical materialism is a basic misunderstanding of the relationship between philosophy and practical activity in production and the revolutionary struggle, a misinterpretation of the role of philosophy as a form of social consciousness. Thus, we find in a philosophical journal: "The workers and peasants have a rich practical experience. They are spontaneous materialists. Working, they do not doubt the objective existence of machines, buildings, soil, agricultural implements, and they are also spontaneous dialecticians for they observe the relationship between various stages of production and the succession of the various seasons of agricultural work. At the present time we find that when the workers and peasants read articles written by professional philosophers they cannot understand them, but they have no difficulty in understanding the philosophical works of Chairman Mao."<sup>2</sup>

While accepting the conflict of opposites, Mao fails to understand that the process of development of a contradiction is itself contradictory, for not only is each of the two sides of a contradiction opposed to the other, but itself contains contradictory sides, so that there is no such thing as "pure" opposition. Thus, if we take the capitalist class, it is easy to distinguish differences and contradictions between the big capitalists and the small capitalists, between the various bourgeois parties, etc. There are also contradictions within the capitalist camp in general, as between the ruling circles of the USA and France to take a current exam-

<sup>1</sup> From "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People", p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Chieh-hsueh yan-chiu*, 1968, No. 7, p. 1.



ple. This, as Lenin pointed out, is an extremely important factor. It means that at a certain stage of the political struggle the interests of the proletariat may coincide on some (minor) issues with the interests of some of the capitalists. It also means that in certain circumstances the interests of the countries of the socialist community may coincide on a number of issues with the interests of the ruling circles of some bourgeois country. In such circumstances, Lenin insisted that it was necessary to urge a "union", a "combination" of opposites. This explains among other things the struggle of the European communist parties for the creation of anti-monopoly unions including part of the bourgeoisie, and the conclusion of political agreements between the Soviet Union and certain capitalist countries, viz., the anti-Hitler coalition during the Second World War.

There is no room for such "union" and "combination" of opposites in Mao's version of the law of the unity and conflict of opposites. The Maoists commit the serious error of failing to regard contradictions as a process and are thus unable to understand the *dialectics* of social development. Significant in this respect is the Maoist criticism of the theses contained in the Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union concerning the transformation of the dictatorship of the proletariat into a state of the whole people. The Maoists stress the coercive function of the dictatorship of the proletariat and insist that it is necessary throughout the period of the transition from socialism to communism. They treat the dictatorship of the proletariat as something constant and static; they do not realise that it is a complex social phenomenon, a unity of opposites, whose reciprocal influence and conflict makes it a process, in a constant state of flux and change. Lenin emphasised that "the dictatorship of the proletariat means a persistent struggle—bloody and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative—against the forces and traditions of the old society".<sup>1</sup> The dictatorship of the proletariat, viewed as a real process, is exhausted at some stage of development and passes into a state of the whole people.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 44.

## The Theory of Balance in Lieu of Materialist Dialectics

We have already seen how eclecticism is an essential feature of Mao Tse-tung's philosophical views. This is equally the case with his method of cognising the phenomena of nature and society, which combines naive dialectics with a curious version of the theory of balance.

In Marxist dialectics inherent contradictions underlie all processes of development. According to the theory of balance, however, it is outward external factors that determine development, and rest, balance and absence of movement are regarded as the normal state of all existing things and phenomena. One of the authors of this theory, N. Bukharin, held that a phenomenon ceased to be in a state of balance or rest (which is the same thing) following a change in one of the opposed forces. As to how this change comes about, let us turn to Bukharin himself. "It is perfectly clear that the inner structure of a system (inner balance) must change according to the relationship that exists between the system and the environment. The relationship between the system and *environment* is the decisive factor, for all states of the system (decline, development, stagnation) are determined by this relationship."<sup>1</sup> In other words, the theory of balance regards opposed principles within society (the system) as two simple mechanical forces, opposed to one another outwardly and in a state of balance, which can only be destroyed by the interference of outside forces. The process of development according to Bukharin is one of balance, followed by the upsetting of balance, followed again by balance.

The theory of balance bears an outward resemblance to dialectics in that it also regards the question of opposites as a question of the struggle between them. But while materialist dialectics deal with internal contradictions that are concomitant and mutually exclusive and their correlation and interpenetration, their contradictions, the mechanistic theory of balance is dealing with the antagonism of mechanically contiguous opposed forces in a state of balance. And balance cannot be a source of development without the interference of outside forces.

<sup>1</sup> N. Bukharin, *Theory of Historical Materialism*, Moscow, 1925, p. 82 (in Russian).



In "On Practice", Mao Tse-tung gives an essentially false definition of the concept "balance-imbalance". "The movement of all things assumes two forms: the form of relative rest and the form of conspicuous change. Both forms of movement are caused by the struggle of the two contradictory factors contained in a thing itself. When the movement of a thing assumes the first form, it only undergoes a quantitative but not a qualitative change and consequently appears in a state of seeming rest. When the movement of things assumes the second form, it has already reached a certain culminating point of the quantitative change of the first form, caused the *dissolution of the entity*, produced a qualitative change, and consequently appears as conspicuous change. Such unity, solidarity, amalgamation, harmony, balance, stalemate, deadlock, rest, stability, equilibrium, coagulation, attraction, as we see in daily life, are all the appearances of things in the state of quantitative change. On the other hand, the dissolution of the entity, the breakdown of such solidarity, amalgamation, harmony, balance, stalemate, deadlock, rest, stability, equilibrium, coagulation and attraction, and the change into their opposite states, are all the appearances of things in the state of qualitative change during the transformation of one process into another."<sup>1</sup>

It is perfectly true that any phenomenon can assume the form of relative rest and the form of conspicuous change. But Mao is wrong in regarding the two forms as consecutive, when in fact they are simultaneous. Mao thus does violence to materialist dialectics when he speaks of dissolution of the entity taking place only when the movement of a thing assumes the form of conspicuous change at the point of the breakdown of balance. No matter what form it assumes, a thing always contains opposites. Harmony exists together with disharmony, equilibrium with disequilibrium, attraction with repulsion and so on. Like the ancient Chinese dialecticians, Mao recognises the existence of opposed principles and the conflict between them, but regards them as being separate from one another in time and space.

Admitting that "dissolution of the entity" occurs only in the case of conspicuous change, at the stage of qualitative

change, Mao denies its occurrence in the state of relative rest, i.e., in quantitative change. According to Mao Tse-tung, things in a state of relative rest are, as it were, in a state of balance, which is regarded as their normal state.

In 1957 Mao Tse-tung "developed" his theory of balance as follows: "An economic plan is drawn up in this country every year and a correct balance is established between accumulation and consumption, in order to achieve a balance between production and requirements. This balance is a temporary and relative unity of opposites. By the end of the year this balance is on the whole dissolved by the struggle of opposites, the entity changes and balance becomes imbalance, the unity ceases to be and the next year a new balance and unity must be achieved. This is the advantage of our planned economy. In fact this balance and unity is partly disrupted every month, and this makes partial adjustment necessary. Sometimes it happens that subjective adjustment does not correspond to objective reality, so that contradictions arise and the balance is upset. *This is called making a mistake.* Contradictions are constantly cropping up and continually being resolved, and this is the dialectical law of the development of things and phenomena."<sup>1</sup>

Here Mao is identifying the appearance of contradictions with the disruption of balance and substituting mistakes for contradictions as the source of development, thereby making balance and the absence of contradictions the normal state of things, and the disruption of balance and the presence of contradictions an abnormal state. Mao attributes a general philosophical character to his ideas on balance and imbalance and uses them to justify his own subjective practical policies.

If in "On Contradiction" dialectical contradictions are regarded as a conspicuous contrast between two far-removed opposites, twenty years later Mao implies that they are anomalies.

The adepts of Maoism openly propagate their leader's theory of balance. In a recent philosophy manual we find the following: "The theory of passive balance is essentially a manifestation of the stability of the world. It regards balance as absolute and rejects the idea that imbalance is an inner

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Two, p. 48 (emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.).

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" (emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.).



necessity, inherent in the movement of things, a necessary stage in the development of things. The authors regard every imbalance as an abnormal phenomenon and reject the law of development 'balance—imbalance—balance'." We need not trouble ourselves with the fact that the authors speak of absolute and relative balance: the main thing is that they declare the thesis of the theory of balance, "balance—imbalance—balance", the formula of development, thereby opposing the theory of balance from the standpoint of ... the theory of balance.

It is known that Mao himself has criticised the theory of balance. But this criticism was not the outcome of any serious theoretical reflection. His critical statements were clearly inserted in "On Contradiction" after he had taken note of the works of Soviet authors analysing this theory. Thus, in the same article we find Mao criticising the theory yet at the same time developing ideas in accordance with it. This is no doubt to be explained by the apparent resemblance the theory of balance bears to Chinese naive dialectics, to which, as we have seen, Mao subscribes. In naive dialectics outward, isolated forces are contrasted, while in the theory of balance it is a question of the antagonism of opposite forces. But in both cases interpenetration and transition into one another are regarded purely mechanically.

The theory of balance in lieu of the inner process of the emergence, development and solution of a dialectical contradiction makes conflict the only means of resolving the antagonism of opposed forces.

Presenting the dialectical contradiction as a mechanical balance or antagonism between two opposed forces that can only be destroyed by the interference of some outside factor, the theory of balance can and does serve as the theoretical basis for the ultra-revolutionary, bellicose political harangues of the Maoists. Suffice it to recall Mao Tse-tung's approach to the relationship between the two world socio-economic systems, which totally fails to take into account the complexity of interaction between these two concrete-historical opposites, and thus leads him to conclude that it can only be solved by means of war.

We find the same position if we turn to the question of contradictions within the capitalist countries. According to Mao and some of his supporters, the balance and the de-

struction of that balance in certain countries can only be achieved by the interference of outside forces. Hence the insistence on exporting revolution.

Mao is essentially ascribing the major role to external factors and conditions, regarding them as the means of solving a conflict, of solving the antagonism between opposed forces. Although he speaks of the struggle of opposites as the cause of development, he does not go beyond a plain admission of this, and is unable to reveal the mechanism of the conflict, and see the process of development as a process of ripening, exacerbation, and resolution—"dismissal"—of contradictions.

Basically, the Maoists use the theory of balance as a methodological basis for such phenomena as the "cultural revolution". It serves as an external factor helping the solution of inner contradictions within the Party. As Chou En-lai, speaking in Wuhan in 1967, declared: "Without disorder, there is no order. Without breaking up the old there is no creating the new. Where disorders have reached the culminative point, such disorders have actually disserved the enemy and inured the masses, thereby enabling problems to be completely resolved."

### Antagonism in Lieu of Contradiction

By making an absolute of the antagonism between two opposed forces, Mao Tse-tung is inevitably led to a misconception of the essence and historical role of antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions. It is common knowledge that social antagonisms are an important feature of societies based on exploitation. Antagonistic contradictions involve the incompatibility of the basic interests of hostile classes, and their solution is impossible without the abolition of the old social order by means of class struggle and social revolution. A typical example of an antagonistic contradiction in our own day and age is the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

The classics of Marxism-Leninism pointed out the transient nature of antagonistic contradictions. Thus, Marx wrote: "The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production..."<sup>1</sup> and Lenin emphasised that an antagonism is a special kind of contra-

<sup>1</sup> K. Marx, F. Engels, *Selected Works*. In three volumes, Vol. 1, p. 504.



diction, that "antagonism and contradiction are by no means one and the same thing. When socialism comes, the former will disappear but the latter will remain."<sup>1</sup> Contradictions in socialist society are non-antagonistic, since private property has been abolished along with the exploitation of man by man, and there no longer exist fundamental differences between the classes.

Mao Tse-tung expressed the above ideas in "On Contradiction", where he admitted that contradictions are not universally antagonistic, that antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions exist side by side in a relationship of mutual transition into one another, and that, being different in character, they require a different approach to their solution. This was all stated in the most general terms and there was nothing new in these reflections, nothing that could not be found in Soviet philosophy manuals.

In later works, Mao departs from this Marxist view, and treats the identity of the opposites of an antagonistic contradiction and their mutual transition and interpenetration as the transition of antagonistic contradictions into non-antagonistic contradictions and vice-versa, and the conflict of contradictory aspects of a non-antagonistic contradiction as the antagonism of two opposed forces.

Thus, in "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" Mao revises the Marxist doctrine concerning types of social contradictions. He replaces the concept of "antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions" with concepts of "contradictions between ourselves and the enemy and contradictions among the people". We are not dealing simply with a more precise definition or an innovation. The point is that Mao is treating the contradictions between the workers and peasants, on the one hand, and the national bourgeoisie, on the other, as contradictions among the people. Thus, Mao writes: "The contradictions between ourselves and our enemies are antagonistic ones. Within the ranks of the people, contradictions among the working people are non-antagonistic, whereas *contradictions between the exploiters and exploited classes have a non-antagonistic aspect as well as an antagonistic one*. . . . In our country, the contradiction between the working class and the national bourgeoisie is

a contradiction among the people. *The class struggle between the working class and the national bourgeoisie in general is a part of the class struggle among the people*, because of the dual character of the national bourgeoisie in this country."<sup>1</sup>

The assertion that the contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie is non-antagonistic is a Right-opportunist, revisionist proposition, and the fact that Mao adds that these contradictions have their antagonistic side as well does not alter the matter in the slightest. In fact, the basic interests of the working class and the bourgeoisie are incompatible, since the building of socialism is by no means in the interests of the latter, which is proved by the whole history of the Chinese People's Republic. Mao replaces the question of class relations with the question of political blocs and alliances with the class that is fundamentally hostile to the working class, the bourgeoisie. Although such agreements are not to be excluded at certain stages, it is fundamentally wrong to deduce from this that the contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie is not antagonistic. The contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie can only be resolved by the elimination of the latter, although, admittedly, in the conditions of socialist construction and the dictatorship of the proletariat the contradiction does not necessarily have to be solved by a leap forward, by an explosion—viz., the liquidation of the *kulaks* as a class in the Soviet Union. It must be said, however, that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its leaders never regarded the contradiction between the proletariat and the *kulaks* as non-antagonistic.

But perhaps Mao Tse-tung's idea that the contradiction between the proletariat and the big bourgeoisie is a contradiction among the people testifies to his creative, original approach to the complex manifold phenomena of reality, to an urge to draw the widest sections of the population of China into the building of the new society? Perhaps it is a proof of his creative solution of theoretical problems and his contribution to Marxist philosophy? This is what Maoist propaganda would have us believe.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" (emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.).

<sup>2</sup> In a speech to the Ninth Congress of the CPC Lin Piao referred to "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" as "a

<sup>1</sup> Lenin Miscellany XI, p. 357 (in Russian).



It is a well-known fact that it was Lenin who first produced the correct scientific solution to the question of the methods of solving different kinds of contradictions after the triumph of socialist revolution. On the basis of a dialectical understanding of contradictions, Lenin insisted on the need to reveal the possible inner link even between antagonistic opposites at certain stages of development of this or that process. Realising that intensification of the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie was inevitable in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism, Lenin nevertheless held that it was possible to make use of the method of state capitalism controlled by the dictatorship of the proletariat, and, under the New Economic Policy, to make use of the bourgeoisie to raise and develop the country's productive forces as long as it was completely subject to state laws, and at the same time was being restricted and gradually ousted. Lenin never ceased to regard the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as an antagonistic contradiction.

Mao Tse-tung's assertion that the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is a contradiction among the people is at variance with his own earlier statement (at the Second Plenary Meeting of the CPC Central Committee, seventh convocation, in 1949), where he said that the main contradiction in China after the proletariat had seized power throughout the country would be the contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie.

The presence in Maoist "dialectics" of mutually exclusive propositions is determined by their social function. Mao makes philosophy as a whole an instrument of politics in the very worst meaning of the word. He adopts a completely utilitarian approach to philosophy, and is only interested in

great work". "In this work . . . Chairman Mao Tse-tung gives an exhaustive treatment of the doctrine of contradictions, the classes and the class struggle in the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the doctrine of the existence in socialist society of two types of contradictions that are different in character—contradictions between ourselves and our enemies and contradictions among the people, and a great theory of the continuation of the revolution during the dictatorship of the proletariat. This great work, like a bright beacon, has lighted the road of socialist revolution and socialist construction in our country, and at the same time has laid the theoretical foundations for the present Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution."

it in as far as it can be made to serve his great-power ambitions.

Applied to dialectics, a utilitarian, pragmatic approach really means using it to justify any political actions at all. In this case dialectics must be provided with a collection of theses capable of being used for such ends, irrespective of whether they agree with one another or not. We can indeed observe this in the Maoist "dialectics".<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung appears to be quite undisturbed by the fact that this approach to dialectics frequently entails insoluble contradictions. An entirely different approach to similar phenomena and deliberate departure from previously declared principles deprives dialectics of every semblance of scientific content and genuine practical value. In fact dialectics cease to be dialectics altogether. But this apparently suits Mao perfectly, for he only needs "dialectics" that will justify the particular strategy and tactics he happens to have chosen at a given time.

The social function of Maoist "dialectics" is pretty clear from Mao Tse-tung's interpretation of the concept of "the people". Thus, he writes: "At this stage of building socialism, all classes, strata and social groups that approve, support, and work for the cause of socialist construction belong to the category of the people, while those social forces and groups that resist the socialist revolution and are hostile to and try to wreck socialist construction are enemies of the people"; "...democracy is established among the people and, united by the working class, all those with civil rights, especially the peasants, establish a dictatorship over the reactionary classes, reactionaries and elements that resist the socialist revolution and oppose socialist construction".<sup>3</sup> At first sight this might appear to be a perfectly correct Marxist definition of the concept of "the people": the people is all those who support socialism and help build it, while

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note how in his speech to the Ninth Congress of the CPC, Lin Biao praised Mao's thesis that the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is the main contradiction in present-day China, and, in practically the same breath, the thesis that this is one of the contradictions among the people (?).

<sup>2</sup> Mao Tse-tung, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People", p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 7.



those who resist the socialist transformation of society are classed as enemies of the people. But in fact, as we shall see, Mao's definition of the term is subjective and ignores class principles.

In Marxist sociology the concept of "the people" is based above all on the decisive role of material production in the development of society and the economic position of the various classes, strata and groups in a particular system of social production, since it is this that determines to what extent this or that class, strata or group is objectively interested in and capable of fulfilling the concrete tasks of social development that a given society faces. According to Mao's definition, however, any social group, even an exploiter group (in this case, the big bourgeoisie) has only to declare its willingness to co-operate in the building of socialism, and participate formally, to automatically qualify for inclusion in "the people".

In the period of transition from capitalism to socialism the concept of "the people" may certainly include petty and middle bourgeoisie, rural and urban, but there is absolutely no justification under any circumstances for extending the concept to include the powerful capitalists. According to Mao's definition, namely "all people with civil rights", such people as the former Vice-President of Kuomintang China, the inveterate reactionary Li Tsung-jen, the economic dictator of Macao, Ho Ying, a member of the People's Political Consultative Committee of China, and a host of other such figures qualify for inclusion in "the people".

Mao's definition of the class enemies of the proletariat is also un-Marxist. By making the main criterion the attitude to the policy of the present Chinese leadership, replacing the correct Marxist expression "class enemies" with the formula "enemies of the people", the Maoists deprive the term of its correct sociological meaning and treat it as a political phenomenon which may or may not be connected with adherence to the exploiter classes—and indeed developments in China over the last few years show that it is not. Instead, a person's class adherence is derived from his political views, and it is not representatives of the exploiter classes who are treated as "enemies of the people" but all those who "resist the socialist revolution and are hostile to socialist construction (read: do not approve of the Mao

group's distortion of the principles of socialist construction) and try to wreck it" (read: struggle against the Mao group).

This approach makes it possible to declare any person an enemy if he expresses dissatisfaction or disagreement with the methods of socialist construction, irrespective of his social origins and social position or the reasons for his dissatisfaction. He has only to express his disagreement with the political decisions of the Mao group to automatically become "an enemy of the people".

It is thus not surprising that in China today it is not the capitalists but the communist internationalists who are declared "enemies of the people".

Thus, in the view of Mao Tse-tung, present-day Chinese society is divided into "we" and "the enemies", that is himself and his supporters and those who think differently, those who disagree with his theory and practice. In the newspaper *Chung-kuo ching-yan pao* for June 23, 1966, we find the following statement: "Whoever opposes the ideas of Mao Tse-tung is a counter-revolutionary." Mao Tse-tung and his supporters apply the term "enemy of the people" as an excuse for all kinds of reprisals against their ideological opponents, even when the latter have never belonged to the exploiter classes and have given years of faithful service to the Chinese people and the Chinese revolution.

The "cultural revolution" brought into stark relief the anti-Marxist essence of the Maoist interpretations of the concepts of "the people" and "enemies of the people". The Mao group claims that the aim of this "revolution" has been to prevent a return to the bourgeois system, that they have been waging a struggle against "enemies of the people" (the word enemy having been enriched with such synonyms as "swine", "members of the black gang", "insects", etc.), and against "agents of the bourgeoisie that have crawled into the Party", "against those who are in power and follow the capitalist path".

Naturally the presence of bourgeois turncoats and even class enemies in the Party is not to be excluded, and it is essential to wage a resolute struggle against them. But the struggle must be waged against real agents of the bourgeoisie and not imaginary ones. During the "cultural revolution" in China, however, it was thousands upon thousands of Communists who were declared by the Maoists to be enemies



trying to wreck the building of socialism, whereas the representatives of the bourgeoisie were safe from all criticism.

This "definition" of class enemies is based on a subjective interpretation of the essence of antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions under socialism that has nothing at all to do with Marxism-Leninism. Thus, Mao writes: "...the first type of contradiction (antagonistic contradictions.—*M.A., U.G.*) involves drawing a clear line between ourselves and our enemies, while the second type of contradiction (non-antagonistic contradictions.—*M.A., U.G.*) involves drawing a clear line between truth and falsehood. Naturally, the question of the relations between ourselves and our enemies is at the same time, to some extent a question of truth and falsehood. Thus, for example, the question of who is right and who is wrong—we, or such internal and external reactionary forces as imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capital—is also a question of truth and falsehood, but it belongs to an essentially different type of question of truth and falsehood than those among the people."<sup>1</sup>

The classification of contradictions is thus deprived of objective content since what do the concepts of truth and falsehood include? And, even more important, who decides what is true and what is false? Apparently this is decided by whoever wields real power in the Party and State at a given moment, so that naturally the truth is always with Mao, and his opponents are always in the wrong.

Mao Tse-tung turned to Marxism-Leninism in the twenties because he considered it to be the best available means of restoring China's greatness. In the thirties and forties he needed to use Marxist phraseology to establish his rule in the CPC. Suffice it to remember his own "Decision on Some Questions of the History of the Party" which abounds in references to the need to struggle against doctrinaire attitudes and those who hold them (read, "communist internationalists"). In the fifties and sixties, Mao needed to refer to Marxist theses in order to conceal his betrayal of Marxism-Leninism and the principles of socialist construction, to strengthen his insecure position within the Party and the country, and justify his efforts to disrupt the socialist community and the

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People", p. 6 (emphasis added.—*M.A., U.G.*).

international communist, workers' and national liberation movements.

In the first years after the triumph of the people's revolution in China, when the Mao group did not yet dare to embark upon overt revision of the principles of socialist construction and break openly with the world socialist system and the international communist movement, when they were forced to adhere to the policy of peaceful coexistence conducted by the Soviet Union, the Maoists still continued to speak of the existence of non-antagonistic contradictions. But as soon as they had altered course and set out on an entirely different path in home and foreign policy, aspiring to hegemony in the world socialist system and the international communist, workers' and national liberation movements, they began to speak almost exclusively of antagonistic contradictions, thereby attempting to justify the need to "break free" of Marxism-Leninism both at home and abroad. This was the purpose of the broad debate on the law of the unity and conflict of opposites that was launched in China in 1964. In order to make their views appear Marxist, they made use of Lenin's authority, quoting ad infinitum his famous idea of "the splitting of a single whole", but interpreting it in their own way.

Officially the debate centred around the theory of Yang Hsien-chen. In actual fact, however, what was involved was a struggle to replace materialist dialectics in favour of Maoist "dialectics". The debate was begun on Mao's initiative and conducted under his auspices, so that although he did not directly express an opinion himself, the views expressed in *Hungchih* and *Jen-min jih-pao* can be safely assumed to represent Mao's own attitude.<sup>1</sup>

During the debate, the law of the unity and conflict of opposites was formulated as "the unity of two principles and the dissolution of the entity", with the Maoists placing the stress on the latter to the total exclusion of the unity of conflicting opposites. The debate revealed Mao's distorted understanding of the Marxist-Leninist teaching of the core of dialectics as soon as the subject of the trends of social development and the major problems of our time—the factors underlying the development of socialism and the world

<sup>1</sup> This was admitted in a January 1967 number of *Jen-min jih-pao*



communist movement—were broached. The Maoists completely distorted the meaning of Lenin's statement concerning the splitting of a single whole. Following Mao's example, the "orthodox" philosophers blithely apply the formula "dissolution of the entity" to all phenomena quite indiscriminately, without drawing any distinction at all between capitalist and socialist society.

The Maoists take the concrete historical situation where "the dissolution of the entity" manifests itself in the form of a rift in exploiter society and its division into classes hostile to one another, and apply it dogmatically to socialism, the world socialist system and the Communist Party and Marxist-Leninist theory.

An article inspired by Mao himself that appeared in the journal *Hungchih* in 1964 contained the following statement. "The international labour movement, like all things and phenomena in the world, also divides." The same applies to Marxism: "A revolutionary, scientific doctrine, automatically engenders its opposite in the course of its development, engenders, that is, a counter-revolutionary, unscientific doctrine."<sup>1</sup> The article stressed that modern (socialist) society also splits, just as society will split "in ten thousand years' time". Classes and class struggle are thus perpetuated. It is now perfectly clear what the Maoists were up to with all this: they were creating a theoretical basis for the justification of the destruction of the CPC and the constitutional organs of the Chinese People's Republic. In this they were demonstrating their real attitude to theory, which is to regard it as an instrument of their irrational, voluntarist practice, called upon to justify *post factum* what they have already done or happen to be doing. This is also their attitude to the laws of dialectics.

We have only to take a look at real life to see that these theses are a parody of dialectics. In "On Dialectics", the work from which the Maoists took the idea of the "dissolution of the entity", Lenin stresses that the dialectics of bourgeois society where this operates most fully is purely "a particular case". It is therefore essential to take into account the specific ways in which the general law of dialectics manifests itself in capitalist and socialist society.

<sup>1</sup> *Hungchih*, 1964, No. 16.

How exactly is Mao's erroneous interpretation of this problem of dialectics manifested? Above all, in the way he denies the special quality of the "dissolution of the entity" in exploiter society where the interests of the hostile classes composing society are diametrically opposed.

In exploiter society "dissolution of the entity" takes the form of a division of society into two hostile camps with different economic and political interests, a different world outlook and morality. Thus the complete division of this concrete society is both natural and progressive, since through an intensification of class antagonisms it approaches its end and thereby determines the triumph of the new, higher social order.

In socialist society the interests of the classes and social groups are united on the basic issues of social life. There are no antagonistic contradictions in socialist society. Since contradictions can only arise, and do only arise, over specific, individual issues, these contradictions are entirely non-antagonistic. Such fundamental matters as the relations between classes and social groups do not entail "division of the entity", for non-antagonistic contradictions do not lead to conflict between social classes and groups, and so do not lead to the division of society, the people as a whole, or opposition between the friendly classes and social groups. This qualitatively new manifestation of dialectics in socialist society is both natural and progressive.

This is not to say that there are no contradictions in socialist society, but simply that such as there are have passed from the sphere of fundamental interests to the sphere of specific, individual interests. Naturally, difference of interests and contradictions between them occur in many spheres of life in numerous matters, large and small, but such contradictions are always individual, never fundamental. There are thus no insoluble contradictions in socialist society, either within a given socialist country or in the inter-state relations among the socialist countries.

For the first time in history progress is achieved in a way that does not involve the division of society into two hostile, conflicting classes, but, on the contrary, is based on the unity of interests of all classes and social groups, a unity that grows and becomes stronger as time goes by.

While in capitalist society division is resolved by class



struggle and revolution, in the case of socialism the contradictions are resolved within the framework of unity by means of social transformations and the improvement of production relations.

The growing unity of all strata of socialist society is a major condition for the discovery and solution of non-antagonistic contradictions, and provided these are objective, concrete contradictions and not artificially created ones, they can always be resolved.

In capitalist society, on the other hand, antagonistic contradictions exist over fundamental issues, and can only be resolved by the demise of the social system itself, so that their solution is a protracted business and assumes most acute, serious forms. In socialist society, in the conditions of socio-political unity, the solution of concrete contradictions represents a step forward for all those who are struggling for further progress. Mao Tse-tung refuses to notice the special nature of the contradictions found in socialist society and dogmatically applies to it the same "division of the entity", thereby distorting the nature and motive forces of the development of socialism.

Socialist society is free from class conflicts and is characterised by unprecedented unity. It is this unity that is the new motive force of socialist society. Marxist-Leninists have never denied the presence of class struggle in countries building socialism. In the period of transition from capitalism to socialism vestiges of the exploiter classes and social groups remain, and there are anti-socialist forces which in certain conditions may resist socialism. But the struggle with such elements does not involve the division of society, but on the contrary signifies its strengthening and further development along the path of socialism.

Mao Tse-tung resorted to defending class antagonisms in socialist society in order to deny the achievements of the Soviet people, who have built socialism and are successfully building communism.

It is clear that not only within each socialist country, but in the world socialist system as a whole, "division of the entity" is manifested in such a way as to exclude division and opposition of interests on major, fundamental issues of the life of the various socialist countries.

The world socialist system is characterised by the fact

that the unity of fundamental interests actually grows and is strengthened in this way. Naturally, different levels of economic and political development, different historical and cultural traditions and different geographical situation can, and do, lead to different interpretations of various concrete problems of socialist construction and differences of opinion which are resolved in the course of all-round co-operation between the socialist countries according to the principles of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism. The communist and workers' parties that stand at the helm of state in the socialist countries regard it as their duty to conduct a correct Marxist-Leninist policy, combining the interests of each individual country with the interests of the socialist community as a whole and with the interests of the communist and liberation movements, in order to ensure that different approaches to various matters should not disrupt the unity of the socialist camp. Contradictions between the socialist countries are brought to light and resolved in the framework of the basic unity of their fundamental interests.

The non-antagonistic character of such contradictions requires that Communists, in their practical and theoretical activities, emphasise and draw attention to those factors that unite the socialist countries and make for their solidarity. Since unity here serves as a major condition for the discovery and solution of contradictions, the ability to make proper use of the law of dialectics in question is a way of stressing the role of unity. Mao Tse-tung and his supporters, however, in the pursuit of hegemony, emphasise the opposite.

According to Mao, "division of the entity" occurs not only in socialist society but in Marxist-Leninist doctrine. The Maoists maintain that the revolutionary doctrine "in its development must engender its opposite, must, that is, engender a counter-revolutionary, unscientific doctrine", and attempt to substantiate this with references to "opportunism" and "revisionism".

Developing as it has in antagonistic class society, revolutionary doctrine has naturally always been under a certain amount of pressure from the ideology of the reactionary classes. It is this that makes the constant struggle against all forms and brands of revisionism and opportunism a law of development of revolutionary theory in exploiter society or



societies where survivals of exploiter society are still deeply rooted. But even here, "division of the entity" takes a very special form that must on no account be confused with the "division" of ideology in exploiter society. Marxism-Leninism develops in the struggle with various attempts to distort it, but it cannot, and does not, itself engender its opposite, as the Maoists insist. In this sense there is no "division of the entity" in Marxism-Leninism. It is impossible to see how a revolutionary doctrine can be said to engender a counter-revolutionary doctrine.

Marxism-Leninism naturally contains contradictions, contradictions between certain old, out-of-date scientific theses and new issues advanced by life, contradictions between Marxism-Leninism as a revolutionary doctrine and hostile views and theories that insidiously squirm their way into it. But the appearance of contradictions such as these and their solution represents not the division of the principles of Marxism-Leninism but, on the contrary, the development and enrichment of Marxist-Leninist principles, their growing strength. In short, the Maoists are barking up the wrong tree when they try to find "division" here.

The Maoists hold that the Party must also "divide" according to dialectics. They regard division within the Party as progress, as a blessing. In actual fact, the progress of the Party is gradual consolidation of its ranks, and division (schism) must be regarded not as progress but as a crisis, since it means that enemies have filtered into its ranks and are destroying it. The strength of the Party lies not in division but in unity of thought and action of all its members, for then contradictions arising within the Party (such as there have been, and will be in the future) are purely specific, individual contradictions, to be solved by all members of the Party, united on the basic points of its programme. The successful solution of contradictions in the form of a battle of opinions helps strengthen the unity of the Party, which in turn is a factor ensuring the further successful solution of such contradictions as may arise. The penetration of bourgeois influences into the Party and the struggle against them is to be regarded not as "division" but rather as the struggle of the Party as a whole against alien elements.

Naturally a situation can occur where, for various reasons (socio-economic, historical, ideological, etc.) leadership of

the Communist Party passes into the hands of non-Marxists, open or covert enemies of Marxism-Leninism—as has occurred in China today. Then "division of entity", the struggle against them is perfectly justified. But such phenomena constitute the exception not the rule, and do not derive from the nature of the Communist Party or socialism.

The same applies to the relations between the communist parties of different countries. Here there can be no contradictions on fundamental issues, and hence no "division"; there can only be contradictions on individual matters of a temporary nature, which are resolved on the basis of essential unity, and whose solution indeed requires such unity and not division.

In short, Maoism emasculates the dialectics depriving them of real live content and transforming it into a collection of sterile formulae. Mao Tse-tung's thesis that development follows the pattern "unity—struggle—unity", which is contrary to Lenin's theory of contradictions, universalises antagonistic contradictions.

In conclusion it must be said that Marxist dialectics demand a concrete historical approach to social phenomena. They cannot be used as an abstract scheme for the logical deduction of answers to all practical questions, but require that not only general features inherent in a phenomenon at all stages of its development be taken into account, but also the features of contradictory development that characterise a phenomenon at a given stage of its development.

The contradictory nature of the development of each socialist country and the socialist community as a whole, or each communist party and the world working-class movement as a whole, have their own individual features in addition to the features that are common to social development in general. The unity of opposite aspects is especially important here, and the contradictions are non-antagonistic in character. The various communist parties are working in different conditions, and this gives rise to different approaches to practical matters, and even to disagreements. But community of fundamental interests enables the various detachments of the world army of Communists to overcome whatever difficulties and disagreements arise among them. The participants in the international forum of Communists in Moscow in 1969 expressed their firm belief that differences



between the communist and workers' parties will be successfully resolved. "This belief is based on the fact that the international working class has common long-term objectives and interests, on the striving of each Party to find a solution to existing problems which would meet both national and international interests and the Communists' revolutionary mission; it is based on the will of Communists for cohesion on an international scale."<sup>1</sup>

The Maoists, however, extend the individual concrete cases of "division of the entity" in the form of a division of society into hostile classes to all social phenomena. Is this to be regarded simply as a theoretical error or a doctrinaire mistake? While it is possible that some of the rank-and-file Maoists are simply misguided, in the case of Mao Tse-tung himself we are clearly dealing with a deliberate departure from the ideas of Marxist philosophy, for his distortion of the dialectics and anti-Marxist interpretation of many major questions of our age is the result not of failure to understand, but of a practical policy that is hostile to Marxism-Leninism being pursued by Mao and his group. The Maoists do violence to dialectics in their attempt to prove what cannot be proved and justify their wrong policies.

Mao Tse-tung's utilitarian approach to dialectics is plainly seen in the fact that he only applies "division of the entity" selectively, to certain, deliberately chosen phenomena.

The "division" of the socialist community is declared progressive and inevitable, whereas in the case of the "division" of China into the Chinese People's Republic and Chiang Kai-shek's Taiwan it becomes a question of the "union of the two into a single entity". The "division" of the Chinese Communist Party is declared to be progressive and inevitable, while with the Chinese bourgeoisie it becomes a question of the "union of the two into a single entity". The "division" of the international labour movement is declared to be progressive and inevitable, but with respect to renegades expelled from communist parties and direct agents of the bourgeoisie the principle of "union of the two in a single entity" is proclaimed.

Clearly then, the debate on the basic law of dialectics was the result not of academic interests in a major scientific

<sup>1</sup> *International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, Moscow, 1969, Prague, 1969, p. 38.*

problem but of Mao's attempt to use the ideas of "division of the entity" to provide theoretical substantiation for his policy of splitting the world communist movement. This is why he has always been so irritated by such concepts as "unity", "identity of contradictions" and the like, and all words reminding him of the need for a concrete approach to different kinds of contradictions, antagonistic and non-antagonistic, have been thrown overboard.

Another important point one is struck by in this connection is that while maintaining that contradictions between communist parties and between socialist countries are antagonistic Mao at the same time declares contradictions between the proletariat and the national bourgeoisie to be a contradiction within the people, and hence non-antagonistic. This is yet another proof of his utilitarian, pragmatic approach to dialectics. In the pursuit of his great-power hegemonistic aims Mao is prepared to cause division ("dissolution") of the socialist community and international communist and working-class movement and unite with their fiercest enemy, the bourgeoisie.

Mao Tse-tung's distorted concept of materialist dialectics leads him to draw the most paradoxical conclusions: firstly, that contradictions cannot be solved, secondly, that contradictions must be exacerbated and thirdly, contradictions must be created where they do not exist. Mao replaces objective dialectics with his own peculiar brand of "subjective dialectics", involving the fabrication of contradictions both within the country and abroad.

Within the country, "subjective dialectics" involve the policy of exacerbating contradictions within the Party, within certain classes and social groups and among them. Hence Mao's claim that the "cultural revolution" is something desirable and inevitable, necessary to the proper development of the Party and the country. This can perhaps be taken as an indication that we can expect further "cultural revolutions" in the future.

Abroad, Mao's "subjective dialectics" involve China's "great resistance" to other countries, and a merciless head-on struggle between them with no quarter given. According to Mao, the absence of such conflict leads to stagnation. Thus, Mao considers that the war between China and Japan helped China's development. He seems to regard the existence of an



outside enemy to China as a blessing in general, judging by the way he searched so hard for a new "enemy", and eventually settled on the Soviet Union. Now, we must assume, China's further development is "ensured". This is the truly monstrous meaning of Mao's "subjective dialectics".

Thus, Mao Tse-tung's "dialectics" and "philosophy" are used to exalt his "philosophical genius", for the "philosophical substantiation" of all his actions and the defamation of his ideological opponents. Dialectical terminology is employed solely for the purpose of concealment, now of great-power chauvinism, now of hide-bound national egoism.

The Maoists strive to back up whatever policies they happen to be pursuing with the relevant quotations from the classics of Marxism-Leninism—the "big leap forward" with the thesis of the idea becoming a material force when it takes hold of the masses, their splitting policy with Lenin's ideas on the division of the entity, the Hungweiping outrages with the Marxist thesis of the need for resolute struggle against revisionism, and so on and so forth—trying to keep as close as possible to the Marxist-Leninist terminology, so that correct theoretical formulae are distorted and misapplied in practice. Apart from some similarity in terminology employed, the Maoist "dialectics" have nothing at all in common with the Marxist dialectical method, and upon closer analysis it transpires that they are nothing more than a modification of the traditional Chinese dialectics whose substance we have already examined.

## CHAPTER V

### MARXIST-LENINIST EPISTEMOLOGY AND MAOIST "LEAPS" IN THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Mao Tse-tung and the ideologues of his cult make staggering claims for Mao's contribution as a theoretician to methodology no less than to dialectics.

The authors of "Three Great Milestones" declare: "In 'On Practice' Chairman Mao has creatively developed Lenin's ideas, pointing out that the transition from perceptual to rational knowledge *represents a leap* and that the subsequent return to practice is another leap. Moreover, he says: 'Correct knowledge is acquired after repeated transition from matter to spirit and spirit to matter, that is, from practice to knowledge and knowledge to practice. Such is the Marxist epistemology of dialectical materialism.' (Mao Tse-tung, "Whence Does a Man Acquire Correct Ideas?") Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin said nothing about all this, but Chairman Mao generalised numerous new empirical facts and advanced a new theory and new explanations."

What primaeval ignorance of philosophy this panegyric to the "thoughts of Mao" reveals! But perhaps this is the extreme ignorance of a few isolated champions of Maoism who have failed to make a correct assessment of Mao's "contribution"?

Let us take a look at what the diploma'd Maoists have to say, the professional philosophers of the Chinese People's University. They also declare Mao Tse-tung to have carried Lenin's doctrine forward and raised it to a new level. "In new historical conditions, Lenin, struggling against idealism, metaphysics, and especially revisionism, in philosophy, de-



fended and developed the all-embracing view that practice is the origin of all knowledge and the criterion of truth. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has always laid special emphasis on practice. Regarding practice as the most outstanding feature of Marxist philosophy and making it a point of departure, he has exhaustively developed the active revolutionary theory of reflection, developed the Marxist view of practice, and developed the thesis of the role of social practice in the entire process of cognition."<sup>1</sup>

The authors maintain that Mao Tse-tung "developed all-sidedly and profoundly the epistemology of dialectical materialism."<sup>2</sup> "Comrade Mao Tse-tung's view of the division of human knowledge into perceptual and rational, his exposition of the features of perceptual and rational knowledge and the qualitative difference and unity of perceptual and rational knowledge on the basis of practice—this is a major contribution to Marxist-Leninist epistemology."<sup>3</sup>

The further we read in the creations of the Maoist theoreticians, the more great "contributions" we find ascribed to Mao's two articles referred to above. Apparently, Mao not only developed the theory of knowledge, but managed to put it into practice, "embodies this theory in a number of concrete tasks: raising the awareness of the worker and peasant masses to the level of the intellectuals, bringing the intellectuals closer to manual labour, the combination of studies with work in production, the connection between engineers and technicians and the worker and peasant masses..."<sup>4</sup> Even the question of "contacts between Chinese and foreign specialists" was "given a theoretical explanation" by Chairman Mao.

We must give the authors due credit, however, for drawing attention to the following "precept" of Mao Tse-tung. "In studying a problem, we must guard against subjectivism, one-sidedness and superficiality."<sup>5</sup> Having quoted this incontrovertible premise, the authors rightly remark: "Subjectivism, one-sidedness and superficiality are the roots of error-

ous modes of thinking."<sup>1</sup> They regard this thesis, which is a rehash of an idea expressed by Lenin in "On Dialectics" as yet another "contribution" of Mao Tse-tung. The most remarkable thing here is that Mao Tse-tung and his champions, while claiming to be the originators of this idea, completely ignore it in their own theory and practice.

But we have yet to examine the most important of all Mao's "contributions". The above-mentioned authors write that "Mao was the first to advance on the basis of all-round development of the theory of knowledge of dialectical materialism a perfect and consistent method of work called 'the mass line'."<sup>2</sup> At first sight, this principle looks most attractive: "To draw from the masses and take to the masses." This brand-new theory is resumed in the formula: "Practice—knowledge—practice," which is reflected in politics in the principle: "Masses—leadership—masses."<sup>3</sup>

If we are to believe all the authors have to say in its favour, we can hardly refrain from exclaiming after them: "How many great discoveries are to be found in the works of Chairman Mao!"

It appears that all Lenin's wealth of ideas on the theory of knowledge can be summed up as the "all-embracing view that practice is the basis of knowledge and the criterion of truth". Naturally, against the background of this abstract premise even Mao's banal reflections on perceptual and rational knowledge and his mental acrobatics with the formula "practice—knowledge—practice" appear to ill-informed Chinese readers who have never read a word of Marx, Engels and Lenin ("foreign" and "irrelevant" to the Chinese situation) to be the height of wisdom and sagacity.

We have deliberately quoted extensively from Chinese sources for the purpose of showing how both the young supporters of Mao and the old "specialists" are united in attaching importance to the "contribution" of Mao Tse-tung. As they see it, Mao's contribution consists in the following: 1) the idea of the division of knowledge into perceptual and rational, the transition from one to the other and then to practice, called a "leap"; 2) the view that practice is the source and criterion of truth; 3) the definition of the features

<sup>1</sup> *Dialectical Materialism*, p. 182 (emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>5</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Two, p. 26.

<sup>1</sup> *Dialectical Materialism*, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 236-37.



of perceptual and rational knowledge; 4) the generalisation of the doctrine of absolute and relative truth; 5) "the theory of knowledge is embodied in a number of concrete tasks", "a perfect and consistent method of work called 'the mass line'", "draw from the masses and take to the masses".

As the Maoists themselves emphasise, the whole "wealth" of Mao Tse-tung's ideas in the field of epistemology is contained in "On Practice", "On Contradiction", and "Whence Does a Man Acquire Correct Ideas?"

As for the first two, the Maoists claim that they are "the best text-book which teaches the people to think correctly, act correctly and learn correctly. They have not only determined the Marxist-Leninist basis in the education of the Chinese Communist Party, but are a brilliant contribution to the world Marxist-Leninist philosophical treasury."<sup>1</sup> Let us for the moment take these claims at their face value and examine briefly Mao's "contributions" by collating them with the theories of Marxism-Leninism.

Before we do so, however, one further remark is in order, something that must always be borne in mind when examining the works of Mao Tse-tung and his supporters. Developments in China and other countries provided ample evidence to convince Mao of the tremendous influence of Marxism-Leninism. Having failed in his attempts to compete with Marxism-Leninism, he now tries to graft Marxist-Leninist teaching to his own conceited hegemonistic pretensions and aspirations for national resurgence, for restoration of the former greatness of the Celestial Empire. Maoism is a parasite living off Marxism-Leninism. The Marxist terms employed are like a code which must be deciphered in order to read the anti-Marxist message his ideas contain, and this adds to the difficulty of exposing them for what they really are. This being so, the only effective method of combating Maoist theory is to decipher the code, thereby revealing the true content. At times it is difficult to find the key to the code in the works themselves, in which case it is necessary to seek it in Maoist practice.

<sup>1</sup> Wang Shih and others, *Short History of the Chinese Communist Party*, Shanghai, 1961 (in Chinese), pp. 169-70.

## Practice and the Relationship Between Theory and Practice

The word "practice" crops up again and again in Mao's articles and speeches, and the call to "combine theory with practice" is one of the "three talismans" which Mao is supposed to have invented.<sup>1</sup> "The theory of knowledge of dialectical materialism raises practice to the first place, holds that human knowledge cannot be separated the least bit from practice, and repudiates all incorrect theories which deny the importance of practice or separate knowledge from practice."<sup>2</sup> "...Materialism and dialectics ... need effort. They must be based on and tested by objective reality."<sup>3</sup> However, this insistence on the primacy of practice, on knowledge being inseparable from practice—and one could go on and on quoting statements to this effect—should not be allowed to mislead us into accepting such statements at their face value, as truly materialist. It all depends on what one means by practice, the practice of what class Mao intends to combine knowledge with, the practice of what class or classes is taken as the criterion of truth. Here we come up against incredible eclecticism, a mixture of naive and vulgar materialism, empiricism, and subjective idealism. Although in "On Practice" Mao refers to several forms of practical activity (in production, the class struggle, politics, science and the arts), basically he limits practice as the source of knowledge entirely to the sphere of politics, and all other spheres of social life are examined through the prism of political practice. Moreover, this political practice derives from the petty-bourgeois class viewpoint of Mao Tse-tung.

Some may feel there is nothing wrong in this, that Mao is thus adopting a consistent class approach and analysing things from a firm class standpoint (especially if we are to

<sup>1</sup> "Three Talismans", a style of work advanced by Mao Tse-tung in the forties, can be summed up in the following three principles: "the combination of theory and practice", "the mass line" and "criticism and self-criticism". Mao himself has never observed these ostensibly sensible rules, which were really no more than a demagogical device for struggle against the Chinese communist internationalists, who were accused of doctrinairism, divorce from the masses, and conceit.

<sup>2</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume One, p. 284.

<sup>3</sup> *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1966, p. 212.



accept it as the proletarian class standpoint). But the point is that we find here the same one-sidedness and superficiality that leads Mao Tse-tung to idealism and abandonment of class, proletarian, affiliation.

This incorrect approach to the class struggle leads straight to vulgar sociology, the incursion of the criterion of class adherence into spheres where it is not directly manifest, such as the natural sciences and the transformation of nature, etc. This involves a distortion of the very concept of "practice" as an objective phenomenon representing the unity of the subjective and objective. The objective, material side of practice—practice as a process existing outside man and independently of the will of the individual—drops out, and we are left with the subjective side, where voluntarism and subjectivism—"the great leap forward", the "people's communes", and so on—flourish, and the Maoist thesis advanced in 1958 that "Anything that is conceivable is feasible" comes into its own.

The transference of these theories to the sphere of "subjective practice" results in mistakes of a voluntarist, subjective kind: the outcome is "to throw all historical realism overboard"<sup>1</sup> and confuse reality with pure fancy.

Practice, as Mao understands it, is the *narrow, separate practice* of an individual or a group of persons *viewed abstractly and pragmatically*. Furthermore, Mao does not even deal with this kind of practice in its entirety, but only with such aspects of it as suit his nationalistic, petty-bourgeois views and may serve to support them. Mao often transforms essentially correct concepts that fall under circumscribed individual "common sense" and "naive realism"—concepts of the popular wisdom—into universal principles with which he tries to define the essence of phenomena incomparably wider and more complex.

Limiting practice to "personal practice", Mao proceeds to examine such matters as the position of the various classes in society and their role in economic development and mutual relations not by generalising the vast material on all the various aspects of their activity but by applying facile empirical methods. "You can't solve a problem?" Mao asks. "Well, get down and investigate the present facts and its

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 517.

past history. When you have investigated the problem thoroughly, you will know how to solve it."<sup>1</sup> "Investigation may be likened to the long months of pregnancy, and solving a problem to the day of birth. To investigate a problem is, indeed, to solve it."<sup>2</sup>

But how can the development of society and class struggle be studied by investigating isolated phenomena? Chairman Mao prescribes his own special method of studying society, and you can rest assured that he will not "chase the sparrow with his eyes closed" or "fish by sense of touch like the blind man". For Mao has discovered that "We must guard against subjectivism, one-sidedness and superficiality."<sup>3</sup> He therefore recommends the following: "For those whose duty is to give guidance and direction, the most essential method of knowing the conditions is that they should, proceeding according to plan, devote their attention to a number of cities and villages and make a comprehensive survey of each of them from the basic viewpoint of Marxism, i.e., by means of class analysis."<sup>4</sup> He goes on to say: "A fact-finding conference does not require a large attendance; three to five, or seven or eight persons will be enough. But ample time must be allowed and an outline of investigation prepared beforehand and, furthermore, one must personally put questions to the participants and jot down the answers, and hold discussions with them."<sup>5</sup>

Mao has taken good care to omit nothing. He mentions "the basic viewpoint of Marxism" and "class analysis", he remembers the plan, the outline of investigation and the need to jot down the answers. In other words, he has done his best to ensure that nobody can accuse him of "narrow empiricism". Yet the method Mao recommends as a universal principle of combining knowledge with practice is really no more than a method of empirical sociology, a method which might be applied in order to learn the situation in one village, one town, or one province at most, and even then with great reservations. The method was used in Yen-an, where it was formulated. But it becomes one-sided and superficial as soon

<sup>1</sup> *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 233-34.

<sup>3</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Two, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Volume Four, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.



as Mao tries to present it as the only way of acquiring knowledge of the world. One is curious to know exactly how Mao and his supporters applied it in order to arrive at the conclusion that "ninety per cent of the people of the world long for revolution" by means of world war. It may be assumed that the conclusion was reached as follows. Chairman Mao chose three to five, or let us say ten persons among the renegade emigré groups residing in Peking and questioned them about "world revolution" and "the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union". Nine out of ten, or perhaps all ten said that in their respective countries "a revolutionary situation has matured and the people are longing for revolution". From which Mao, having pondered upon what he had heard, finally drew the conclusion: "Ninety-five per cent of the people of the world long for revolution." Those interviewed took the occasion to declare their love for Mao, from which he deduced: "Ninety-five per cent of the people of the world worship the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung."

The Maoist approach to practice, to revolutionary experience, as a basis for study of reality and the development of a correct scientific policy, is radically opposed to the Marxist-Leninist approach. The theoretical propositions of Maoism are derived from the narrow, limited sphere of political practice, to the exclusion of all other kinds of practice, from class struggle (chiefly of the peasantry) and national experience, with the inevitable result that they are one-sided and nationalistic.

Lenin emphasised the indivisibility of revolutionary theory and the revolutionary experience of all the detachments of the world proletariat and its allies. He insisted that "theory cannot be thought up. It grows out of the sum total of the revolutionary thinking of all countries of the world."<sup>1</sup>

When Lenin set the Marxists of Russia the task of developing Marxian theory to devise a programme for their Party, he pointed out that for this to be successfully achieved it was necessary for the Party to study and generalise the history of socialism and democracy in Western Europe, the history of the revolutionary movement and the labour movement in Russia, and connect the conclusions arrived at with the work-

ing-class movement: "to bring definite socialist ideals to the spontaneous working-class movement, to connect this movement with socialist convictions that should attain the level of contemporary science. . ."<sup>1</sup>

In view of the international character of the working-class movement it is essential to study the experience of every single national detachment of the working class together with the experience of the general struggle of the working class of all countries. Generalisation of this experience involves critical study of the past and present and assessment of future prospects. The Marxist-Leninist approach to the theoretical generalisation of the revolutionary experience of each detachment involves studying this experience in connection with the experience of all countries, although it does provide for a deep-going analysis of all forms and methods of struggle within the framework of a single nation without exaggeration or universalisation of any particular form of struggle.

Lenin never universalised any particular form of struggle, armed or peaceful. He certainly did not universalise that special form of armed struggle, guerrilla warfare. In fact, what Lenin had to say about guerrilla warfare completely destroys Mao's theory that the experience of guerrilla warfare in China is to be regarded as a universal law of the world revolutionary movement. Lenin wrote: "The party of the proletariat can never regard guerrilla warfare as the only, or even as the chief, method of struggle; it means that this method must be subordinated to other methods, that it must be commensurate with the chief methods of warfare, and must be ennobled by the enlightening and organising influence of socialism. And without this *latter* condition, *all*, positively all, methods of struggle in bourgeois society bring the proletariat into close association with the various non-proletarian strata above and below it and, if left to the spontaneous course of events, become frayed, corrupted and prostituted."<sup>2</sup>

One of the first things we notice about Mao Tse-tung's approach to the relationship between theory and practice is the way he either greatly underestimates or completely ignores the experience of other countries. On those rare occasions

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 354.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 11, p. 221.



when he does take into account the experience of other countries, he does so in a purely utilitarian fashion, simply because it happens to suit him at a particular juncture. "*We must absorb whatever we today find useful...*" However, we must treat these foreign materials as we do our food, which should be chewed in the mouth, submitted to the working of the stomach and intestines, mixed with saliva, gastric juice and intestinal secretions, and then separated into essence to be absorbed and waste matter to be discarded..."<sup>1</sup> This is the approach Mao Tse-tung advises to Marxism-Leninism. With his hide-bound nationalistic understanding of revolutionary experience, he calls for the sinification of Marxism.

Mao Tse-tung also universalises the Chinese experience of revolutionary struggle, drawing general conclusions from Chinese practice alone, ignoring the experience of other detachments of the revolutionary movement, and indeed the basic tenets of Marxist-Leninist theory. The author of a book on the early period of Mao Tse-tung's activities writes: "Mao Tse-tung held that systematic investigation and study of the surrounding situation is the permanent task of the revolutionary. Therefore, Comrade Mao Tse-tung did not consider it necessary to send many people abroad, but deemed it necessary to begin with the study of China and decide the practical questions of the Chinese revolution on the basis of the real situation in China."<sup>2</sup>

Mao Tse-tung himself stated at a meeting in the town of Tientsin on March 17, 1957: "To take, for example, affairs here in China, unless we develop Marxism we shall not be able to proceed with them successfully. The basic premises and principles of Marxism in being applied in China must acquire a Chinese colouring and be resolved in accordance with the concrete situation that obtains here." (Quoted from the Hungweiping newspaper *Tung-fang hung*, August, 1967, "Long Live the Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung").

At first sight this statement is perfectly compatible with the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint and arouses no serious objections. But the point is that in order to develop something one must have first mastered what already exists. Otherwise one

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Three, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> Tsai Wei, *The Struggle of Marxism Against Anti-Marxist Waves in the Period of the "Fourth of May Movement"* (in Chinese), Shanghai, 1961, p. 127.

is simply at best "discovering America" and churning out vague general formulae.

It is all very well to solve practical matters by taking into account the situation in China as long as one is dealing exclusively with individual practical questions. But as soon as one adopts this approach in relation to the working-class movement, the result is the enclosure of international phenomena within narrow national limits, empiricism in theory and encouragement of nationalism in politics.

An exaggerated emphasis on the special experience of China was typical of Mao Tse-tung, as we have already seen, from the very outset of his career. Later, when he acquired leadership of the Party, over-emphasis of Chinese experience became the dominant feature of his views. In the original version of his article "Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War" (written in 1936) he accused of doctrinairism those Chinese revolutionaries who criticised his own "narrow empiricism" and recommended thorough study of the experience of the October Revolution and "the experience of the revolutionary war in Russia". Mao could hardly declare in public that there was no need to study the experience of the October Revolution, but he does this in so many words in his statements which lay special emphasis on the national Chinese experience. Thus, he declared: "Although we must cherish the Soviet experience and even value it somewhat more than experience of other countries throughout history, because it is the most recent experience of revolutionary war, we must cherish still more the Chinese experience of revolutionary war..."<sup>1</sup> Later, for the publication of *Selected Works* this passage was edited in such a way as to give equal weight to Soviet and Chinese experience.<sup>2</sup>

As for his critics, Mao soon forbade them to express their opinions at all, on the grounds that they were only familiar with "foreign models" (i.e., the experience of the Comintern and the CPSU), "had not studied China" and "the moment they took office" noisily speechify and criticise, picking faults left and right. Mao rejected the accusation of "narrow empiricism", suggesting that the only ones guilty of this were

<sup>1</sup> R. Schram, *Chinese and Leninist Components in the Personality of Mao Tse-tung*, *Asian Survey*, 1963, No. 6, pp. 269-70.

<sup>2</sup> See Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume One, p. 177.



the practical workers "who lack wisdom, perspective and foresight."<sup>1</sup> Mao clearly regarded himself as being possessed of "foresight", since he had the "foresight" to insist on the sinification of Marxism and the revival of China's grandeur. Thus, *Mao approaches the question of practice from the standpoint of Sinocentrism.*

Mao's petty-bourgeois limitations are also patent in his assessment of Chinese revolutionary practice. Mao regards practice as being primarily the practice of peasant revolution, the practice of the political struggle of the petty-bourgeois and peasant strata and of the *éléments déclassés* who are so numerous in China, and above all the "practice" of political persecution of his opponents. The working class, the revolutionary experience of the struggle of the international working-class movement and the Chinese proletariat, lie outside the practice Mao is so fond of discussing.

One searches in vain in the works of Mao for generalisations of the experience of the working-class struggle. Liu Shao-chi declared in his address to the Seventh Congress of the CPC in April 1945 that the ideas of Mao Tse-tung were "*the theory and politics of the emancipation of the peasantry*".<sup>2</sup> Liu Shao-chi makes no mention at all of the place of the working class in the works of Mao Tse-tung, and this is hardly surprising for Mao completely ignores the most important thing in Marxism—the study of the universal historical mission of the proletariat. We can afford to ignore Mao's references to the working class in "On People's Democratic Dictatorship" and his instruction of August 14, 1968, that "the working class is the leading class", since they were dictated by circumstance and do not reflect the essential views of Maoism, which, as Maoist practice shows, deny the leading role of the working class. Mao may pay lip service to the idea of the "working-class leadership", but he interprets it in practice as unquestioning obedience to his own instructions, as making the workers "the patient buffaloes of Mao".

Mao treats the struggle of the peasantry and the broad masses in China as being quite unrelated to any particular relations of production. He is entirely concerned with the

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Four, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Liu Shao-chi, *On the Party* (in Chinese), Peking, 1953, p. 27.

political or, to be more exact, the anti-feudal and national liberation aspect of the practical struggle of the masses.

Mao advances slogans of struggle without regarding the struggle as the product of a certain system of production relations, without reference to the relevant content, course and conditions of the development of this struggle in all its connections and conditioning factors. This is to be explained by the fact that the slogans are derived from abstract postulates, from "the thoughts of Mao", instead of being the result of exhaustive study of each form of struggle, each step in the transformation from one form to another, with careful substantiation of the connection between the given struggle and the general struggle of the working class of the whole country, its fusion with the common struggle of the workers of other countries, and assessment of its place in the international struggle of the working class. This is one of the most important aspects of the class roots of the petty-bourgeois, chauvinistic nature of Mao and Maoism as a political trend.

From the standpoint of dialectics, Mao Tse-tung has gone astray in the question of the relationship between the general, the particular and the individual in the understanding of revolutionary experience. He declares the individual and particular to be universal, and proceeds to deduce from this "universal" a new particular and individual.

The progressive Japanese philosopher Mori Nobushige has the following to say of Mao Tse-tung's understanding of the combination of theory and practice. The abstract nature of "On Practice", its chief defect, the author writes, consists in the fact that while theorising on the unity of theory and practice, it overlooks the question of unity of world view and method, partyism and scientific substantiation, class affiliation and universality, which provides the only real basis for concretising the problem of the unity of theory and practice.<sup>1</sup>

Nobushige rightly notes that Mao Tse-tung's endless repetition of the formula "practice—knowledge—practice" expresses absolutely nothing, since it does not differentiate between materialist concrete reality and positivist individual reality. He says that dogmatic repetition of various formulae

<sup>1</sup> See Mori Nobushige, *Criticism of Mao Tse-tung's Works "On Practice" and "On Contradiction"* (in Japanese), Tokyo, 1965.



together with this ready-made formula is intended to conceal and compensate for a primitive approach to reality, theoretical helplessness, and paucity of ideas. Maoist doctrinairism derives from empiricism, and is its essential precondition and side-product.<sup>1</sup>

### Mao's Oversimplified Approach to Theory

Mao Tse-tung and his supporters treat the relationship between theory and practice in oversimplified, mechanistic terms. We have already cited Mao's statement that theory is derived from practical experience, and that the more the practical experience one has the more theories there will be, and the richer theoretical activity will become. Mao is thereby implying that philosophy and dialectics are extremely easy sciences that anybody can master, even an illiterate person, provided he has experience of production and class struggle.

This Maoist approach has been reflected in the policy of "the masses study philosophy" and "letting philosophy out of the scholar's study". The apparent democratic nature of these slogans conceals unparalleled profanation and debasement of theory, and of the Party's task, as the vanguard of the working class, of bringing theory to the masses.<sup>2</sup>

The slogan "the masses study theory, the masses develop theory" is in fact simply a screen used to conceal an attempt to lead the Party away from real study of Marxist-Leninist theory and the experience of the Soviet Union and other

<sup>1</sup> Mori Nobushige, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Mao Tse-tung and his group use this theory in an attempt to avoid responsibility for the fact that the CPC has done practically nothing at all since the forties to connect the Chinese working-class movement with scientific communism. The efforts of the communist internationalists to propagate Marxism-Leninism were obstructed by the powerful machinery working to impose the "thoughts of Mao" on Party members. Although the decisions of the Eighth Congress (1956) helped check the advance of Maoism, they were unable to put an end to the chauvinism which had been corrupting the Party for years. It is hardly surprising that the decisions of the Eighth Congress were to all intents and purposes revised only a year later, although the Maoists were unable at that time to crush the opposition of healthy elements. Ten years of fierce struggle, including the notorious "cultural revolution" were necessary before "Mao Tse-tung's Thought" could once more be declared the official basis of the Party's ideology at the gathering called the "Ninth Congress".

socialist countries, and limit the Party cadres to the study of everyday experience, thereby producing a slide towards creeping empiricism.

Consider the following. "Practical struggle is the best school, and participation in practical struggle is the best training, since ability to wage the struggle can only be acquired by participation in it.... At first we had no experience of carrying out democratic and social revolution, but by persistent practical study we acquired knowledge and mastery of the objective laws of democratic and social revolution and learned to carry out the revolution. In the same way, if we wish to properly master knowledge and skill in socialist construction we must practice socialist construction and thereby learn it in practice. Only in practicing building can we learn to build."<sup>1</sup>

Here we have clear evidence of the Maoist refusal to take note of the experience acquired by other parties in socialist construction, and their insistence on the theory of "self-reliance". The statement that the CPC "by persistent practical study (i.e., study of *Chinese* practice.—*M.A., U.G.*) acquired knowledge and mastery of the objective laws of democratic and social revolution" reveals a complete disregard for the vast experience of the world revolutionary movement.

The author completely rejects the experience of former revolutions and international revolutionary experience. One is reminded of Lenin's thesis that in order to become a Communist one must first enrich one's mind with knowledge of all the wealth mankind has accumulated, a thesis that became one of the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism. This thesis is quite incompatible with the Maoist endeavours to present their narrow empiricism as the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism and impose it upon the world revolutionary movement.

It must be said that there were elements in the Chinese Communist Party in the late fifties and early sixties who had the courage to speak out, either openly or indirectly, against the disregard for Marxism-Leninism and the previous accomplishments of Marxist theory, and against the primitive

<sup>1</sup> Wu Tseng-yi, "To Raise the Political Level", *Feng-tou*, 1962, No. 3.



half-baked theories to which the label "contemporary Marxism" was attached. Peng Teh-huai, member of the Politburo of the CPC and Minister of Defence until 1959, was reported in a Hungweiping newspaper as having described "the thoughts of Mao" as follows: "They are outdated and useless. We take the ideas of Chairman Mao and are guided by them in all we do, and we study all his works. And yet these books are becoming outdated and useless."

"Conditions are different now. These things are absolutely useless. At best, we can use them for references. But by saying that 'the East is red' and that Mao Tse-tung is the great saviour of the people we are only encouraging idealism." Liu Shao-chi declared in a speech to Party workers in 1962: "To say that the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung are the peak of Marxism-Leninism is not a scientific approach. Surely Marxist-Leninist teaching is not going to cease developing?"

Ho Ying-chu, an outstanding Chinese philosopher and historian, wrote in 1963: "Some comrades believe that theory is born out of practice and that if they engage in much practical activity they can rest assured that there will be much practical experience and theory will develop as a matter of course. They have failed to make it clear that *while theory is undoubtedly born out of practice, it does not equal practice*. Unless all questions of the practical implementation of the revolution and other important questions are subjected to thorough analysis and raised to the level of theory, *and if limited experience is mistakenly regarded as embodying general truths, then empirical mistakes will inevitably be committed.*"<sup>1</sup>

Ho Ying-chu went on to call for the adoption in China of a policy of socialist construction based on generalisation of Chinese practice, Marxist-Leninist principles and the study of the experience of socialist construction in the fraternal countries. The same tendency was expressed in Liu Shao-chi's appeal in "On the Self-cultivation of Communist Party Members" "to be faithful pupils of Marx and Lenin". It must be remembered that these declarations were made at the time when the Chinese Communists were pondering over the catastrophic results of Mao's "three banners" policy, and trying

to assess their country's future prospects. During the bacchanalia of the "cultural revolution" Peng Teh-huai and Ho Ying-chu came under fire from the Hungweipings and were included in the "Black Gang" as opponents of "the thoughts of Mao". At the so-called Twelfth Plenary Meeting, in flagrant violation of the Rules of the CPC and the Constitution of the Chinese People's Republic, Liu Shao-chi, Chairman of the Chinese People's Republic, was "expelled forever from the CPC and removed from all posts inside and outside the Party".<sup>1</sup>

An oversimplified, empirical approach to theory such as we have been referring to is thus clearly detrimental to the Party's role as theoretical vanguard of the working class. The founders of Marxism-Leninism, while pointing out that theory develops from the generalisation of practice, stressed that theory is a special sphere of science, the development of which required a certain level of knowledge and mental preparation.

Lenin pointed out that by itself the working class was only capable of developing an awareness of its immediate economic requirements, which does not necessarily mean rejection of the capitalist system or bring to light the inner causes of the development of capital and exploitation of the working people, let alone determine the path to be taken in struggle for the abolition of capitalism and the creation of a new, socialist order.

Mao, on the other hand, claims that the masses are capable of understanding the essence of imperialism and exploitation, and the Party must simply "draw from the masses and take to the masses". Here is what he writes in "On Practice": "Similarly with the Chinese people's knowledge of imperialism. The first stage was one of superficial, perceptual knowledge, as shown in the indiscriminate anti-foreign struggle of the Movement of the T'ai P'ing Heavenly Kingdom, the Boxer Movement; etc. It was only in the second stage that the Chinese people arrived at rational knowledge, when they saw the internal and external contradictions of imperialism, as well as the essence of the oppression and exploitation of China's broad masses by imperialism in alliance with China's

<sup>1</sup> *Hsin-hua jih-pao*, Nanking, February 13, 1963 (emphasis added.—M.A. U.G.).

<sup>1</sup> "Communique of the Twelfth (Enlarged) Plenum of the CPC Central Committee", *Jen-min jih-pao*, October 31, 1968.



compradors and feudal class; such knowledge began only about the time of the May 4 Movement of 1919."<sup>1</sup>

The reader who is unaware of the real content of Mao's views and his attitude to the masses might well be left with the impression that Mao has an extremely high opinion of the abilities of the Chinese people. In actual fact the above assertion really serves the opposite purpose, that of preventing the Party from arming the Chinese working people with the Leninist views of imperialism.

### Mao's "Discoveries" in the Theory of Knowledge

The Maoists claim that Mao made a great contribution to the development of the theory of knowledge with the thesis of the transition from perceptual to rational knowledge and then to practice as the result of a "leap". He is, moreover, given the credit for having advanced these views *for the first time*. Just how much truth, if any, is there in all this?

The question of the existence of perceptual and logical (or as Mao calls it, "rational") stages in the single process of cognition was posed and answered by philosophers in ancient times. Thus, the Chinese sage Mo-tzu regarded that basic knowledge was that acquired through the "five senses", while understanding perfectly well that such knowledge only provided an image of a thing without answering the question "why is it so?". Man acquires knowledge of the causes of things by "rational thought", beginning with "description and denomination of objects", and going on to "thought on objects". Mo-tzu and his followers regarded understanding of the causes of things as the "highest complete knowledge"—"wisdom". Thus, Mo-tzu wrote: "Thought is the method of achieving true knowledge." In the chapter entitled "Canon" of Mo-tzu's book we find the following: "Reason is the understanding of the essence of things. Reason, based on perceptual knowledge explains the causes of things and thereby attains clarity and lucidity, as if the thing were before one's very eyes."<sup>2</sup>

Mo-tzu and his followers divided knowledge into three categories according to type and provenance: "direct knowledge acquired through personal observations"; "indi-

rect" or "reported" knowledge "acquired from other people", and finally, rational or reflective-verbal knowledge, which is the result of the fusion of the above two forms in one, and which is acquired through thought.

To turn to European philosophy, we know that ancient Greek and Roman philosophers divided knowledge into two basic categories: the "dark", perceptual, and the bright, lucid rational. The difference between the materialists and the idealists was that the latter (Plato, for example) denied the importance of perceptual knowledge, and even considered it a hindrance to the attainment of true knowledge, while the former insisted on the importance of perceptual images as the objective basis of knowledge, often indeed underestimating the importance of abstract logic. Thus, according to Democritus, reason "possessing the most subtle organ of knowledge in thought" derives its evidence from sensations arising as a result of the influence on the sense organs of objects in the outside world, consisting of atoms. What Mao claims to have been his own "discovery" was already known to, and expounded by, Mo-tzu and his followers in China and by the materialists in Ancient Greece.

Later on, both idealists and materialists accepted the division of knowledge into perceptual and rational. We meet this division frequently in the English materialist philosophers, Spinoza, and the French materialists. Francis Bacon, with his materialist theory of knowledge, regarded experience as the first stage of knowledge and reason, the rational processing of perceptual experience, as the second. Moreover, Bacon rejected the extremes of both empiricism and rationalism. The Dutch philosopher Spinoza differentiated three kinds of knowledge: perceptual knowledge, giving a superficial understanding of individual things, rational knowledge, and intuitive knowledge as its highest form, the ability to perceive a thing "through its essence or through knowledge of its immediate causes".

The French materialists also divided cognition into two stages—the perceptual and the logical. La Méttrie and Diderot, for example, considered sensations to be the basis of thought as the essence of logical deduction. French materialism, being contemplative, was based on the mechanical reflection of objects in the external world on the "screen of the mind".

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume One, p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> Mo-tzu (in Chinese), Peking, 1956, p. 204.



Kant and Hegel, the classics of German philosophy, also accepted the relationship between perceptual and rational knowledge. Hegel's objective idealism stressed the importance of experience and relating our knowledge to reality, regarded by him as a unity of existence (phenomena) and self-contained existence (substance), i.e., as necessary essence.

Hegel wrote as follows of the relationship between the perceptual and the logical: "The *content* that fills our consciousness, of whatever kind it be, constitutes the *actual substance* of the feelings, views, images, notions, aims, duties, etc. and of the thoughts and concepts. Feeling, view, image etc. are thus the forms of such *content*, which remains one and the same whether felt, viewed, pictured or desired, whether it is *only* felt, felt, viewed, etc. with a mixture of thought, or only thought. In any one of these forms, or in a mixture of several, the content is the *object* (Gegenstand) of the consciousness."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the claims of Mao and his followers to have "discovered" the division of the cognitive process into perceptual and rational is wholly unfounded. It is worth noting that the founders of Marxism-Leninism did not regard this division as a distinguishing feature of Marxist epistemology, but treated it as something self-evident, already demonstrated in philosophy.

Lenin made a profound and exhaustive analysis of the Marxist version of the process of cognition as combining two stages in his brilliant work *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*. The problem has since been developed by Marxist philosophers taking into account developments in the natural sciences, psychology and physiology. The Marxist-Leninist theory of reflection was most fully discussed in the thirties by the Bulgarian Marxist T. Pavlov, and in the books, manuals and articles of the Soviet philosophers V. V. Adoratsky, P. F. Yudin, M. B. Mitin, F. I. Khaskhachick and others.

It should be realised that the various correct propositions that are undoubtedly to be found in "On Practice" are really borrowings from Soviet sources. However, Mao interprets them in his own way, according to his distorted view of the

<sup>1</sup> Hegel, op. cit, p. 35.

major problems of Marxist epistemology, as is evident among other things in his approach to the stages of cognition and their relationship to reality. To begin with, Mao treats each stage as entirely separate: first we have perceptual knowledge, then a "leap" into rational knowledge, followed by a further "leap" into practice. This mechanistic division of the integrated process of cognition is apparent in the following statement of Mao's: "Practice, knowledge, more practice, more knowledge; the cyclical repetition of this pattern to infinity, and with each cycle, the elevation of the content of practice and knowledge to a higher level."<sup>1</sup>

In "Whence Does a Man Acquire Correct Ideas?" Mao Tse-tung presents these stages of knowledge as a sequence of separate "processes of cognition". "Countless phenomena of the objective external world are reflected in a man's brain through his five sense organs—the organs of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. At first, knowledge is perceptual.<sup>2</sup> The leap to conceptual knowledge, i.e., to ideas, occurs when sufficient perceptual knowledge is accumulated. This is one process in cognition. It is the first stage in the whole process of cognition. . . . Then comes the second stage in the progress of cognition, the stage leading from consciousness back to matter, from ideas back to existence, in which the knowledge gained in the first stage is applied in social practice to ascertain whether the theories, policies, plans or measures meet with the anticipated success. Generally speaking, those that succeed are correct and those that fail are incorrect. . . . Man's knowledge makes another leap through the test of practice. This leap is more important than the previous one."<sup>3</sup>

To begin with, Mao splits the process of knowledge into a series of separate, individual stages. He then goes on to transfer questions of epistemology into the sphere of practical political decisions in a simplified, mechanistic manner. In so doing, he confuses the source of knowledge with the actual process of knowing which is based on specific accumulated material. Mao completely dismisses the question of continuity, the adoption of the experience of others. Every one of the

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume One, p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth remembering in this connection that Hegel, in the last century, held that reason, thought, is present in perception, since a certain level of generalisation is already underway.

<sup>3</sup> *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*, pp. 207-08.



"theories, directions, plans, schemes" has to go through all the processes of knowledge and every proposition has to be tested anew in direct individual experience. Likewise, Mao completely disregards the experience of his predecessors. He dismisses all borrowed, indirect experience as "bookish", and simply ignores it.

Mao Tse-tung is a nihilist as regards the application to practice of the knowledge of former generations. In his opinion, this knowledge is perfectly useless, or at best, requires testing anew against the conditions of Maoist practice. "All comparatively complete knowledge is acquired through two stages, first the stage of perceptual knowledge and secondly the stage of rational knowledge. . . . What sort of knowledge is the bookish information of the students? Granted that their information is entirely true knowledge . . . something which has been verified by others but not yet by themselves."<sup>1</sup>

Mao thus regards the knowledge acquired from studying the experience of past generations or other peoples, from written sources, as harmful "bookishness" and a source of doctrinairism. It was in accordance with this attitude that Mao advised his cousin: "If you read a lot of books, you'll never become emperor."

This nihilistic attitude to the human treasury of knowledge is in direct contradiction to Marxism-Leninism, which insists on continuity in the development of knowledge. It is anachronistic in our age to regard knowledge, as Mao does, simply as the result of direct personal experience. Engels, writing in the last century, noted that: "By recognising the inheritance of acquired characters, it (modern natural science.—*Ed.*) extends the subject of experience from the individual to the genus; the single individual that must have experience is no longer necessary, its individual experience can be replaced to a certain extent by the results of the experience of a number of its ancestors. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

A further major weakness of Maoist theory is the metaphysical understanding of practice as the criterion of truth. Mao Tse-tung is highly inconsistent in this matter. While speaking of an endless cycle of "practice—knowledge—practice", "matter—spirit—matter", he regards the verifica-

tion of knowledge in concrete-historical conditions as a *single act*, and not as a dialectical process. Thus, according to Mao, the truth of knowledge is confirmed by the success of a single attempt to apply it in practice. He does, it is true, make an exception for social phenomena, but this is simply the exception that proves the rule.

Moreover, Mao understands "the success of practice", as indeed practice itself, purely pragmatically, as "suited to the purpose". In "On Practice" he declares "class nature", and "practicality" to be the "two outstanding characteristics" of Marxist philosophy completely ignoring that inalienable feature, its scientific nature. This pragmatism in the Maoist approach is expressed in the fact that theory itself is regarded not as a science but as guidance for action, the methodological basis for developing the most suitable strategy and tactics, policies and slogans, and in a purely utilitarian manner, as a means to certain ends, as an "instrument". According to Mao, Marxism-Leninism is an arrow shot straight to the target of the Chinese revolution. The implication is that Marxism-Leninism and revolution are quite separate things, success or failure depending entirely on the skill of the archer.

The chief mistake of Maoism here is that it destroys the organic relationship between revolutionary practice and revolutionary theory, and between the objective and subjective factors of their development. Theory, as an instrument—an "arrow"—is reduced to a convenient list of useful rules, a collection of tactical ideas, directions, orders, etc. At the same time, universalisation of direct experience and a complete disregard for knowledge acquired in the past and all non-personal experience, reduces theory to a collection of individual generalisations of narrow empirical experience rendering impossible the development and enrichment of theory and giving rise to doctrinairism, metaphysics and subjectivism.

Mao's empiricism in his treatment of the question of the relationship between theory and practice, knowledge and experience, is clearly seen in the following statement. "Knowledge starts with experience—this is the materialism of the theory of knowledge."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in treating experi-

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume Four, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> F. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, p. 267.

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume One, p. 291.



ence as the starting point of knowledge, Mao fails to see the difference between materialism and idealism. The thesis that "knowledge begins with experience" was typical of materialism prior to Marx, while today it is highly popular among various trends of subjective idealism, from the Berkleyans to the neo-Kantian agnostics. Despite all his protestations of fidelity to class and Party principles, in practice Mao renounces all commitment to proletarian class and Party principles. Mao Tse-tung's analysis fails to recognise the fact that a man's experience and the way it is reflected in his mind is determined by his social, class position and is quite independent of his will.

When Mao goes on to supplement his thesis that "knowledge begins with experience" with the pragmatist assertion that "generally speaking, what is crowned with success is right and what is unsuccessful is wrong", he is adopting a purely positivist view of practice that is subjective and voluntarist.

Professor Nobushige writes of Mao's un-Marxist approach to the question of experience that these "thoughts of Mao" can be used to justify the practice of any forces at all, even the most reactionary. After all, according to this logic, in the period when developing fascism was winning "victories", this could even serve as proof that it was "right".<sup>2</sup>

There is thus clearly nothing new in the Maoist "theory of knowledge". While claiming to be the originator of his theory, Mao is in fact either repeating the most elementary truths of pre-Marxian materialism or expounding his own eclectic brand of subjective idealism combined with vulgar, mechanistic materialism.

### The Epistemology of Dialectical Materialism and the Empiricism and Subjectivism of Mao Tse-tung

The chief features of the epistemology of dialectical materialism (the list is far from exhaustive) are as follows:

a) the object and reality are regarded as man's "objective activity", i.e., Marxism associates the process of knowledge

<sup>1</sup> See Mori Nobushige, op. cit.

as the reflection of the objective world with man's revolutionary, practical-critical activity;

b) Marxism holds that: "Dialectics is the theory of knowledge of (Hegel and) Marxism. This is the 'aspect' of the matter (it is not 'an aspect' but the *essence* of the matter) to which Plekhanov, not to speak of other Marxists, paid no attention."<sup>1</sup>;

c) Marxism demands that "each proposition should be considered (α) only historically, (β) only in connection with others, (γ) only in connection with the concrete experience of history."<sup>2</sup>;

d) Marxism has adopted and develops the materialist theory of reflection. "From living perception to abstract thought, and from this to practice—such is the dialectical path of the cognition of truth, of the cognition of objective reality."<sup>3</sup> Lenin emphasised that dialectics understood as epistemology reveals the history of knowledge and the inner laws of the transition from ignorance to knowledge.

On the basis of this fundamental premise the theory of knowledge of dialectical materialism examines a wide range of general methodological problems concerning the relationship between mind and matter, thereby revealing the dialectical link between mind and matter, the role of labour and other forms of human activity in the emergence and development of consciousness, the active role of language in expressing consciousness and in the accumulation and transmission of knowledge. Marxism-Leninism also examines the reverse process—the influence of man as a thinking being on the world.

Marxist epistemology is largely concerned with exploring the paths of knowledge, its forms and stages. Great stress is placed on the dialectical essence of the process of cognition, and careful study is made of the various forms of logic, the laws of thought, the nature of concepts, judgements, views, conclusions and the role of theories and hypotheses in the discovery of truth.

A basic premise of Marxism-Leninism is that the truth is a process of the movement of knowledge from subjective

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 362.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Vol. 35, p. 250.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Vol. 38, p. 171.



ideas to objective truth via practice (and technology). This was noted by Lenin. The aim is to reveal the relationship between theory and practice and demonstrate the active role of this relationship in man's efforts to transform the world.

In order to acquire a correct understanding of Marxist epistemology it is essential to examine the materialist theory of reflection in close association with the dialectics of absolute, relative and objective truth, bringing out their contradictory unity, their mutual transition into one another, the spiral nature of the process of cognition of truth, the relationship between the historical and the logical, the importance of the principle of elevation from the abstract to the concrete in understanding the essence of things in their dialectical concretion and many aspects, their interpenetration and mutual transition.

Another major question of Marxist epistemology is the problem of dialectical logic, the study of categories as forms of cognition of the essence of the objective world, analysis of the laws and features of the dialectical process of cognition of nature, society and thought.

We have no intention of expounding in detail the theory of knowledge of dialectical materialism. However, a brief look at the basic problems of Marxist epistemology and a comparison with the way they are treated in the articles of Mao Tse-tung, shows the absurdity of the claims that vulgarised repetition of a few elementary premises from manuals of Marxist philosophy constitute "the very best generalisation of the basic content of the theory of knowledge of dialectical materialism". The "profound" content of the Maoist "theory of knowledge" can be summed up in the following statement. "Often, correct knowledge can be arrived at only after many repetitions of the process leading from matter to consciousness and then back to matter, that is, leading from practice to knowledge and then back to practice. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge, the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge."<sup>1</sup>

In "On Practice" Mao repeats and chews over the basically correct idea that practice is the source of knowledge, but in so doing he vulgarises and distorts it, identifying practice with experience and making direct personal experience the

source of all knowledge. Thus, he writes: "Anyone who wants to know a thing has no way of doing so except by coming into contact with it, i.e., by living (practising) in its surroundings. . . . If you want to gain knowledge, you must participate in the practice of changing reality. . . . If you want to know the theory and methods of revolution, you must participate in revolution. All genuine knowledge originates from direct experience."<sup>1</sup> Or again: ". . . Marxism teaches that in our approach to a problem we should start not from abstract definitions but from objective facts and, by analysing these facts, determine the way we shall go, our policies and methods."<sup>2</sup> A reader who is unaware that Mao identifies practice with subjective perceptual experience and reduces objective reality as necessary being to the sum of facts (the insertion of the word "objective" makes no real difference) might well be duped into regarding the above statements as correct Marxist theses. Mori Nobushige points out that Mao fails to draw a distinction between materialist, and positivist individual, concretion and that the former is dissolved in the latter, so that Mao's references to "specific essence" and "specific contradictions" can contain nothing but pragmatism. Nobushige notes how Mao, in both theory and practice, confuses the concepts of "reality" and "actuality". This represents a failure to draw a distinction between phenomena in their totality and empirical facts as simple actual being, on the one hand, and reality as the manifestation of what is essential and fundamental in the development of nature, society and knowledge, on the other.

Since Maoist epistemology does not distinguish between the logical and the historical in the development of the process of knowledge and ignores the method of elevation from the abstract to the concrete, Mao Tse-tung's conclusions are abstract postulates, devoid of the wealth of concrete reality. Mao's vague general formulae, although "derived from analysis" of certain "objective facts", remain lifeless, incomplete, one-sided postulates, since they are not enriched with concrete content in the course of collation with practice, with experience. In contrast to Maoism, Marxism-Leninism reviews practice as the sum practice of the working class of

<sup>1</sup> Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung, pp. 208-09.

<sup>1</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Volume One, pp. 286, 288.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Volume Four, p. 69.



a given country and the practice of the working class of all other countries taken together, as national and international experience (in the case of social experience) in their entirety, as the sum of the scientific experience of past and present, the experience derived from experiments in a given science and allied sciences (in the case of knowledge in the social sciences).

Marx wrote that the method of elevation from the abstract to the concrete is simply a method by means of which thought takes hold of the concrete and reproduces it as the spiritually concrete, and that it is never under any circumstances the process of emergence of the concrete itself. Since Mao Tse-tung's concepts and deductions never go through the stage of taking hold of the concrete, with Mao the combination of theory with practice is frequently achieved by postulating reality from abstract definitions. In this case theory simply becomes an apology for subjectivist practice.

## CONCLUSION

For years the name of Mao Tse-tung was associated in the minds of many people in various countries with the revolutionary struggle of the Chinese people and the activity of the Communist Party of China. This impression, promoted by the Maoist claims that Mao has brilliantly applied the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism to Chinese conditions, makes it especially hard for some people to understand the present nationalist and anti-Soviet policy of the Mao group. At the same time, they tend to regard Mao Tse-tung's departure from Marxism-Leninism as a recent phenomenon, an accidental zig-zag, and feel that it is only a question of appealing to his reason and conscience and he will think better of it, and everything will return to normal. But this is simply an infantile illusion, and a very dangerous one at that, since it disarms the Communists in the face of the splitting activity of the Maoists, enabling them to continue their corruption of the communist movement from within.

Many Marxist works have been published in the Soviet Union and other countries recently, analysing the historical roots of Mao Tse-tung's anti-Marxist views, and removing the mask to show Mao's policies as they really are, the stand he took at all the main stages of the Chinese revolution. Worthy of special mention are the book by Wang Ming (Chen Shao-yu), prominent member of the CPC, member of the CPC Central Committee of the sixth, seventh and eighth convocations, *On the Events in China*, published by the Soviet publishing house *Politicheskaya literatura* in 1969, and the memoirs of the German Communist internationalist Otto Braun published in several numbers of the weekly *Horizon* (GDR) and later in the Soviet weekly *Za Rubezhom*



in 1969 and 1970. The pamphlet *Pages from the Political Biography of Mao Tse-tung* by O. Vladimirov and V. Ryzanstev contains valuable factual material on the nationalist, anti-Marxist views and anti-Party activities of Mao. The above-mentioned material proves conclusively that Mao Tse-tung never was a genuine Marxist or a real Communist but simply joined the communist movement because it was the movement with the most authority, that Mao's aims were only consonant with those of the communist movement at the stage of the national revolutionary struggle for the liberation of China from foreign capital and feudalism.

Yet there are still people with rather hazy notions of Marxism-Leninism who under the influence of Maoist and imperialist propaganda continue to regard Mao as a "lost sheep" who can be returned to the fold, as a "seeking" Marxist.

Certain Maoist theses seem attractive to some politicians and revolutionaries in the Afro-Asian countries who lack the reliable information necessary to form a correct concept of their essence. If they actually visit China they are surrounded by so much false propaganda and agitation that they are quite unable to gain any real insight into what is going on and simply have to take at its face value everything that is foisted upon them and whatever they are "shown".

These revolutionaries from Asia and Africa accept the outward propaganda aspect of Maoism as its true essence. Thus, some Arab freedom fighters believe Mao's declarations of support for them, little suspecting that while publicly announcing their support for the Arab struggle, including the struggle of the Palestinian Arabs, the Maoists are doing everything in their power "behind the scenes" to prolong the struggle. In this connection we cannot do better than quote from a speech made by Mao Tse-tung at a meeting in Peh-taiho as long ago as August 17, 1958, which was reported in the Hungweiping journal *Tung-fang hung* in July 1967.

"It is best to work from the premise that tension is more to our advantage and less to the advantage of the West. Tension is advantageous to the West in that it permits them to expand arms production and it is to our advantage in that it can set in motion all active factors. . . . *Let the Americans and the English stay in the Lebanon and Jordan as long as possible.* We must not help the Americans appear in a good

light. *Every extra day they stay there helps us by giving us material for articles exposing them,* makes the American imperialists remain the object of universal condemnation. *But when we are making propaganda we should not talk in this manner; we should say that they must get out immediately.*" (Emphasis added.—M.A., U.G.) This is what Mao's "support" is really worth!

Hundreds of thousands of Chinese are herded to meetings in Peking and representatives from Asia, Africa and Latin America are invited. Mao publishes a declaration demanding that "the American paper tigers" clear out of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Africa and Latin America. Yet, all the efforts of Peking, working through secret diplomatic channels, are directed towards keeping the Americans as long as possible in the places where the Maoists themselves are not yet in a position to set up their own rule. Mao speculates on the discontent of peoples with the aggressive actions of the Americans. He demonstrates his "revolutionary ardour" in an orgy of hypocrisy, in words but not in deeds, and tries to influence public opinion in these countries and the members of the liberation movement there in the spirit of Maoism.

It requires tremendous lucidity and sober-mindedness on the part of revolutionaries to understand what lies behind the "revolutionary" phrases and declarations of Mao and his entourage. Here we have the extremely dangerous situation when the general position of the struggle in several areas of the world makes revolutionaries fall an easy prey to the influence of revolutionary phrases, which leads to the defeat of the revolution and the destruction of the revolutionaries themselves. Lenin, the great master of revolution, warned revolutionaries of this danger.

The tragic experience of the revolutionary movements in a number of Afro-Asian and Latin American countries in the last decade reveals the danger all too plainly. Surely the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Indonesian Communists after the events of September 30, 1965, serves as a severe enough warning of the dangers of following the advice of Mao Tse-tung and his emissaries. Here is surely ample evidence that we are not dealing with the mistakes and errors of a Marxist but with an attempt to make use of the authority of Marxism-Leninism and use the world revolutionary cause for the furtherance of the great-power chau-



vinist plans of the Maoist leadership in Peking and their appetite for hegemony.

The myth of Mao being a man who is trying to inspire the younger generation with revolutionary ardour and challenge bureaucracy and stagnation has gained wide currency among Left-wing youth in Europe and America. Some student groups at the Sorbonne and Rome University hold demonstrations demanding social transformations and democratic reforms in the education system at which they carry portraits not only of Marx and Lenin but also of Mao Tse-tung. They have heard, and read in the bulletins distributed by Chinese embassies and missions in millions of copies, that Mao called the young people of China to revolt. They are impressed by Mao's thesis "Revolt is a just cause". They have heard that Mao called for the destruction of the "old patterns" and "the bourgeois education system". These young people seem to believe these "thoughts of Mao" correspond to their own sentiments. They do not realise what it was that Mao really called upon the young people of China, blinded by fanaticism, to revolt against. The "Little Red Book" and Chinese propaganda material does not mention the fact that Mao was really making use of the young people as a blind tool for the destruction of the very gains, of the very system, that give young people real freedom, develop their creative ability and make them real masters. The "Little Red Book" and other Chinese propaganda pamphlets do not tell how the very same young people whom Mao called to revolt are now being driven by Chinese army units from the towns into wild mountain regions and deserts to be used to carry out acts of provocation against China's neighbours, and herded into military settlements on the borders of the Soviet Union, Mongolia, India, Vietnam and Burma.

These little red-covered pocket books and pamphlets printed on excellent fine paper, naturally make no mention of the fact that over seventy million Chinese children are unable to receive an education as a result of this "revolt", and that hundreds of thousands of former students will be unable to complete their studies at university and institute. Mao himself declared in November, 1968, "The sky will not fall down if enrolment to the higher educational institutions is suspended for two or three years!"

These little books, red in colour, but black-brown in con-

tent, do not quote such statements of Mao as those he made in 1964, on the eve of the "cultural revolution": "Schools are little vaults, emitting evil everywhere, and shallow ponds teeming with turtles"; "A science course can be cut in half. Confucius taught only six arts: ceremony, music, archery, charioteering, the holy writings and arithmetic. If you read a lot of books, you'll never become an emperor.... The trouble now is, first that there are too many subjects and second that there are too many books."

As a warning to those who still associate the red colour of the Maoist pamphlets distributed outside China with revolution and communism, we quote the words of several prominent Chinese Communists who emerged from the crucible of the Chinese revolution only to fall victims to arbitrary Maoist persecution in the course of the "cultural revolution". Sun Yeh-fang, director of the Institute of Economics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences: "To follow the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung in life is the same as wearing dark glasses on a dark night."

Wang Jen-chung, member of the CPC Central Committee of the eighth convocation, until 1966 Secretary of the Central-South Bureau of the Central Committee (reported in the Chinese press in June 1966 as having swum with Mao during his fantastic record swim that summer): "The thoughts of Mao Tse-tung are an insipid rice dish, to which one must add one's own oil and salt in order to make it edible."

Tao Chu, member of the CPC Central Committee up to 1967, and once an ardent champion of the "thoughts of Mao": "Reflections on the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung are like a fountain without water"; "Chairman Mao's ideas of socialism are the socialism of poverty and agony"; "The 'three banners' policy is a suicidal policy"; "The Great Leap Forward is solving tasks by the method of the despot Shih Huang Ti: 'kill the duck to obtain the egg'."<sup>1</sup>

One could go on and on quoting such views, which it must be remembered were expressed by people who for years were close to Mao Tse-tung, propagated his ideas and believed the Mao myth. It was only when they came to put

<sup>1</sup> All these statements were published as evidence of the "counter-revolutionary" views of these people in the Hungweiping press, in articles about their conviction by the Hungweipings.



these "thoughts" into practice that they became convinced of how unfeasible and far-removed from reality they were.

Thus the Soviet magazine *Kommunist* (No. 3, 1969) was perfectly correct in its characterisation of Maoism as an anti-Marxist trend in its editorial "The Features of the Situation in China and the Position of the CPC at the Present Stage". "The Maoist programme on questions of social construction is extremely 'radical' and 'Left-wing' in form, but reactionary and utopian in content. The programme is the outcome of a total rejection of the Leninist principles of socialist construction and an inability to find correct, effective methods of solving the complicated problems in an extremely backward peasant country."

Unbiased analysis of "the thoughts of Mao", of his philosophical and political views, shows that the theory and practice of Mao Tse-tung and his followers has nothing at all in common with Marxism-Leninism and scientific communism, except for a certain terminological similarity. But the great danger of this ideology is that with its subtle methods of disguising itself as revolutionary Marxism and attempts to speak in the name of socialism and world revolution it is sowing confusion in minds of some sections of the revolutionary and anti-imperialist movement, especially among young revolutionaries. Moreover, Maoism thereby creates highly favourable conditions for anti-communist ideological propaganda against revolution, Marxism-Leninism, and scientific socialism.

It is significant that imperialist propaganda has been altering its sights in recent years. Whereas at one time tons of paper were used to discredit the revolutionary struggle of the Chinese people and its Communist Party, today alongside attempts to capitalise on the difficulties of political and economic development that have arisen from the policy of the Mao group, there is a growing tendency to express a kind of respect for the present Chinese leaders and present them as people with a concern for their country's interests and national grandeur.

Anti-communist centres in the USA, Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany hold wide symposia and "scientific" conferences at which many distinguished Sinologists make zealous attempts to detect "Marxist", "Leninist", "Stalinist", etc, elements in the views of Mao Tse-tung and

try to gain acceptance for Mao's "Chinese model of communism". Thus, at a symposium held in the USA in 1966 on the subject "What Is Maoism?", material from which appeared in the journal *Problems of Communism*,<sup>1</sup> such outstanding Sinologists and Sovietologists as S. R. Schram, R. Cohen and B. Schwarz tried very hard to prove that Mao Tse-tung is an adherent of Marxism-Leninism, that he has shown "concern for preserving the spirit of revolutionary struggle", that he is "a Leninist revolutionary and an Afro-Asian nationalist".

Apart from the various symposia and numerous articles published in both scholarly and popular journals and magazines, many American and West European Sinologists have devoted monographs to Mao Tse-tung and his "thoughts", in which the abundant factual material is often interpreted in such a way as to present Mao as the founder of a new model of socialism. Thus, Professor Robert North of Stanford University (California) named his book *Chinese Communism*. It is as though Professor North were trying to lend support to Chen Po-ta's thesis that "the ideals of socialism and communism... have not been introduced from outside".

It is significant that many of these authors "conscientiously" repeat the anti-Soviet inventions of Maoist propaganda. Although they are in possession of the facts about the history of the CPC, they are nevertheless equally "conscientious" about repeating many Maoist fabrications concerning the history of the Chinese revolution and the CPC that are designed to discredit the Comintern and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and minimise the importance of the help China received from the international communist movement and the socialist countries.

Some bourgeois propaganda agents insist that Mao is a "true Marxist", that Mao and his group and not the communist parties criticising them are right from the standpoint of Marxist theory. Such "concern" for the revolution and the purity of Marxist theory from its most inveterate enemies has far-reaching aims—the discrediting of the ideals of socialism and communism.

It is no accident that the leaders of the Trotskyite Fourth

<sup>1</sup> See *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XV, No. 5 (Washington, September-October, 1966), pp. 1-30.



International have been increasingly active champions and "volunteer" propagandists of "the thoughts of Mao" in various countries over the last few years. Maoist and Trotskyite views coincide on many points. The present-day Trotskyites are quite correct when they claim priority for invention of numerous theoretical propositions of Mao Tse-tung, such as the theory of "permanent revolution", the "thesis of the continuation of the revolution during the dictatorship of the proletariat", the thesis of "the restoration of capitalism in the USSR" and a host of other anti-Soviet concoctions. They are equally justified in claiming that the "cultural revolution" in China is the realisation of Trotsky's ideas of struggle against "bureaucratisation of the Party", etc.

Several foreign publicists write articles and make statements in which they attempt to justify the anti-socialist, anti-Marxist views and practice of Mao Tse-tung taking a "broad view", repeating what are essentially Maoist theses, such as "the experience of the October Revolution is no use to China", and the idea that Mao has created a special "Chinese brand of socialism". Thus, the editor-in-chief of the Yugoslav journal *International Politics* even tries to ascribe to Mao "creative development of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of socialist revolution". Without knowing anything of China and the real practice of Mao Tse-tung during the last few years, he tries to present the "cultural revolution" as enriching the theory of socialism and even as the passage from "the period of etatisation and bureaucratisation of socialist society in China" to the period of "democratisation and humanisation of social relations". It is difficult to find a greater misapprehension of the real situation in China than this.

These authors, having no real knowledge of the essence of the events in China or of Mao's real policy, see just what they wish to see in the theory and practice of Maoism.

The development of events in China and the policy of the Peking leadership cannot but arouse genuine concern and alarm among all honest men throughout the world, among all revolutionaries and progressives, and all genuine friends of the Chinese people.

This is why in exposing the disruptive, anti-Soviet activities of the Maoist leadership it is essential to analyse and

criticise the theoretical roots of Maoism, its class and ideological basis.

The present work has been an attempt at a critical analysis of one of the components of Maoism, its philosophy. This analysis shows beyond doubt that the theoretical errors of Mao Tse-tung can on no account be considered temporary, chance phenomena, but that they derive inevitably from his outlook.

Mao Tse-tung has never been a Marxist in his philosophical views. Firstly, he treats the basic question of philosophy from a subjective-idealist, and not a materialist, standpoint, regarding ideas, subjective activity, as the determinant of social development and substituting the question of the relationship between subject and object for the question of the relationship between mind and matter.

Secondly, Mao distorts the concept of "practice", reducing it to the practice of the class struggle of the Chinese peasantry. Mao combines universalisation of this practice with an empirical approach to theory.

Thirdly, Mao Tse-tung has reduced the rich content of the laws of the dialectics to one single law, the law of the unity and conflict of opposites, distorting it, refurbishing it with naive dialectical ideas and the theory of the antagonism of two opposed forces (the theory of balance).

Fourthly, Mao Tse-tung treats the process of knowledge as a purely mechanistic relationship between the perceptual and rational stages.

Fifthly, Maoist philosophy ignores the concrete-historical approach to analysis of the phenomena and processes of the objective world. In other words, it does not contain the feature that distinguishes Marxist philosophy from all other philosophies.

Sixthly—and this is extremely important—Mao Tse-tung regards various philosophical problems from the standpoint of nationalism and Sinocentrism.

Mao simply borrows Marxist-Leninist formulae and nomenclature wholesale. But the presentation of a few general premises of Marxist philosophy in popular, vulgarised form can be ignored since it does not constitute an organic part of Mao Tse-tung's philosophical views.

The claims that Maoist philosophy represents a new stage in the development of Marxist philosophy are thus quite



unfounded. On the contrary, it really takes several steps backwards in the history of world philosophy.

It emerges clearly from analysis of the works of Mao that he never properly understood Marxism-Leninism, but while capitalising on Marxist revolutionary terminology continued to adhere to the views of peasant revolutionary democracy combined with militant great-Han chauvinism. Mao Tse-tung never advanced beyond the Chinese bourgeois and petty-bourgeois revolutionaries, and this applies not only to his philosophical views.

In political economy Mao's only "contributions" have been the idea of a Great Leap Forward and the "people's communes", "the law of saddle-like development of the economy", and more recently, the creation of isolated semi-natural, economic units in the towns, the countryside and the army. Moreover, when applied in practice, these ideas eventually led to the economic stagnation and political crisis which China is at present experiencing.

Therefore, regarded from a Marxist-Leninist standpoint, the theoretical works of Mao Tse-tung and the Maoist claims that Mao's ideas contained in articles written twenty to thirty years ago and the anti-Soviet articles of recent years represent "the Marxism-Leninism of the contemporary age" only raise a smile.

The so-called "thoughts" of Mao on theory and practice are an eclectic jumble of petty-bourgeois revolutionarism, sinified social-chauvinism, Confucianism and utopian egalitarian socialism with a sprinkling of Marxist-Leninist theses in a vulgar, simplified interpretation.

Maoism does not represent an integrated system ideologically and the only things that it systematically justifies and substantiates are nationalism, hegemony and anti-Sovietism.

In creating this eclectic ideological concoction, Mao Tse-tung and his group base themselves on the idea that the broad masses of people participating in the revolution have no time to go into the finer points of doctrine and are attracted by short snappy slogans, the idea that attractive slogans can make the doctrine attractive even if it is little understood.

In the case of China, the spread of myths and legends about Mao Tse-tung and his "thoughts" is favoured by the fact that almost half the population are illiterate, by the fact

that the majority of Party members and the working class are, for historical reasons, ill-prepared as regards general education and training in theory, and also the fact that the population live in complete ignorance of what is going on at home and abroad, in total isolation from the outside world.

In the international field, the extremely abstract character of the ostensibly radical theses of Maoism favours its mythicisation, enabling the Maoists to conceal their real aims and foreign revolutionaries to imbue the Maoist theses with whatever content they please, according to their own sentiments and aims, which have nothing at all to do with the real aims of Maoism. The weaving of myths around China and Mao Tse-tung is also promoted by the fact that Mao and his followers prevent the spread of real documentary information about China, the history of the Chinese revolution and the present situation in the country, but instead propagandise the "Little Red Book" and disseminate various panegyrics to the wisdom of the "thoughts" of Mao.

Maoism is not, and cannot be a form of creative development of Marxism-Leninism applied to Chinese conditions, since, if examined soberly, Mao's works of the 1930s and 1940s deal mainly with various stages of guerrilla warfare and universalise specific features of the Chinese revolution and not the revolutionary experience of the Chinese people over the last forty to fifty years.

The Chinese revolution is a complicated phenomenon, containing much that is original and unique in the world revolutionary process, and therefore to pick certain individual features, however important, and present them as universal truths—dogmas that must be accepted by all countries and peoples—is to distort the experience of the Chinese revolution and the history of the revolutionary process as a whole. As Lenin pointed out: "... any truth, if 'overdone' (as Dietzgen Senior put it), if exaggerated, or if carried beyond the limits of its actual applicability, can be reduced to an absurdity, and is even bound to become an absurdity under these conditions."<sup>1</sup> This is what has happened to the works of Mao Tse-tung. Therefore, all the attempts of the Maoists to impose Maoism on the Chinese people and the

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 14, p. 99.



world revolutionary movement as a whole in place of Marxism-Leninism are doomed to failure.

At the Ninth Congress of the CPC, Maoism was declared the basic ideology of the new regime. After the Ninth Congress, the process of Maoism's break with Marxism-Leninism can be considered completed. Words borrowed from the Marxist lexicon are all that remain of Marxism-Leninism in the official views of Peking on all major questions of philosophy, political economy and the theory of Communism.

The chief difference between Maoism and Marxism is that while the latter is a *science*, the former has evolved into a kind of *religion* with its own *Church*.

Afraid to risk allowing their views to face the test of aware, informed criticism, the Maoists try to limit as far as possible all knowledge that could rival the dogma they are enforcing from above. What Mao Tse-tung and his supporters really need is ignorant, spiritual paupers, and they would like to limit the knowledge of every working person to the most primitive minimum necessary for him to fulfil his labour function.

Identifying Marxism-Leninism with religion, the Maoists also tried at the Ninth Congress to present their leader as the successor to Marx and Lenin, as a theorist who has made a notable contribution to the development of Marxist-Leninist thought.

The frequent verbal references to Marxism-Leninism at the Congress and in other CPC documents makes it necessary to begin by carefully examining the slogans and theses borrowed from Marxism-Leninism as a cover for the real views and instructions that underlie the present policy of the Mao group, and secondly—and this is especially important—to carefully distinguish between the words and slogans of the Mao group and their practical policy.

At least two points of ideology draw attention to themselves in the material of the Ninth Congress. Firstly, an attempt was made to use the Marxist-Leninist banner that is sacred to all socialists to cover a grotesque parody of socialism and betrayal of proletarian revolutionary theory.

The most typical feature of the policy proclaimed by the Ninth Congress was that it shifts the centre of gravity in the Party and the entire activity of the state from questions of developing the economy and socialist construction to

foreign policy aims, the struggle for the assertion of the nationalistic aspirations of the Mao group. Basically, all the directions of the Ninth Congress are aimed at creating a militarist-bureaucratic state capable of conducting an adventurist great-power policy in international affairs, spear-headed against the socialist countries and the world communist movement. The Maoists try to justify this volte-face with the old Trotskyite idea of the impossibility of the revolution triumphing in one country without the triumph of the world revolution. Lin Piao made the following statement in his speech, citing Mao Tse-tung: "From the Leninist viewpoint ultimate victory in one socialist country does not only depend on the efforts of the proletariat and broad popular masses of that country: it depends on the triumph of the world revolution and the abolition of the exploitation of man by man throughout the world, leading to the emancipation of all mankind."

Surely no special evidence is required to show that this thesis has nothing at all in common with Leninism. The Communists of the Soviet Union, and the Communists of other countries too, realise perfectly well, as they have for a long time, that this was the thesis with which the Trotskyites attacked Leninism, tried to turn the CPSU aside from the solution of the tasks of economic and social development and urge the Soviet Union along the slippery path of adventures and provocations in the international field.

Now this thesis is being made full use of by the Maoists. It is serving the same ends as it did in the past—attacking Leninism and justifying an adventurist, expansionist foreign policy.

Today, the Chinese people are being informed of "the great strategy" of Mao Tse-tung—"preparation for the event of war, preparation for the event of natural disasters, all for the people". They are being told: "We cannot speak of final victory yet. Nor shall we be able to speak of it in the next decade."

The Maoists had recourse to this theory in order to forestall criticism and evade responsibility for the deterioration of the people's living conditions, the ruination of the national economy and their adventures abroad.

The aim pursued in advancing the thesis of the permanent threat of restoration of capitalism as the central guiding principle of the whole political and ideological activity



of the leadership for the whole period of socialism is intended to create an atmosphere of "imminent crisis", general political tension which the Maoists can use for the purpose of tightening their control. It serves them as an excuse to organise permanent persecution of progressive forces, of all who disagree with the reactionary Maoist policy. In fact, it is this that leads to the realisation of the possibility of social degeneration and a counter-revolutionary restoration of the worst forms of anti-popular, bureaucratic dictatorship, which bears a remarkable resemblance to the regime of Chiang Kai-shek and similar regimes.

What, one wonders, is the Maoist "new order"? Lin Piao's speech formulates and makes public in a more or less complete form Mao's principles of the organisation of society. The new state machinery is roughly as follows.

The Army is declared to be the main decisive element of the whole social structure, and is regarded as the main bulwark of the new regime, "the main element of the state".

For Mao the Army is the main organisational bulwark of the present regime. Its main function is to keep the whole population subject to "the thoughts of Mao". As a result, the Army is torn away from its social basis and ceases to be an army of workers and peasants to become the instrument of the military-bureaucratic dictatorship of the Mao group. In these conditions the social contradictions of Chinese society are not reduced but increased, and the very fact that the Army is used for coercion of the masses speaks of the corruptness of the regime and the inability of the Mao group to retain power without daily resorting to armed force.

Mao Tse-tung draws extensively on the experience of Chiang Kai-shek, and it is no accident that he has repeatedly referred to him as *his teacher*. Chiang Kai-shek's main support and organisational strength lay in the Army, which controlled all the higher organs of power. Military men are in the majority in the new CPC Central Committee and Politburo. All the so-called revolutionary committees that have replaced the constitutional organs of power and the Party committees are controlled by the military. The leaders of twenty-four out of twenty-nine "provincial revolutionary committees" and committees in the cities that come under central authority are military men.

The Chinese working class, disunited and disorganised, is

actually no more than an object of politics, and the most widely proclaimed slogan "The working class directs everything" is simply the fig-leaf of the regime of personal power of Mao Tse-tung and his entourage. This was once more confirmed and strengthened by the Ninth Congress in its unprecedented resolutions on the "permanent" nature of the leadership, the naming of successor, etc.

The Ninth Congress was, in fact, the culminating point of the efforts of Mao and his followers to turn the CPC into an organisation on an army model, with strict discipline entirely adapted to suit the requirements of the military-bureaucratic dictatorship and its anti-popular policy. The decisions of the Congress show that in the protracted struggle of the internationalist forces in the CPC against adventurist, anti-Marxist policy of Mao Tse-tung the scales have, for the time being, tipped in favour of the Maoists.

The Ninth Congress fundamentally revised the political, organisational and ideological principles of the Party. The new Rules formally declaring the CPC to be "the political organisation of the proletariat" in fact serve to turn the Party into the obedient tool of the military-bureaucratic dictatorship.

*Mao Tse-tung's policy in Party construction* also represents a revival of the militarist, monarchist principles of Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang. At one time the Chinese revolutionaries condemned the reactionary Chiang Kai-shek regime for demanding that the whole country "must bow to one leader wielding absolute power", and "only accept what the leader says as right". In the Kuomintang it was the practice to take the "oath of loyalty" to the leader, and there existed the principle "faith in the leader must extend to superstition, obedience to the leader must be blind submission". It is difficult to see where the difference lies between the Kuomintang "rules" and the instruction of Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao on taking the oath to the three loyalties to Mao Tse-tung instituted by Mao, or such Maoist thesis as "we must carry out the instructions of Chairman Mao irrespective of whether we have understood their importance or not",<sup>1</sup> or again that "devotion to Chairman Mao is the chief criterion of the transformation of outlook".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Jen-min jih-pao*, July 18, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> *Jen-min jih-pao*, November 27, 1967.



In order to ensure that Mao has a completely free hand in the Party, its leading organs have been made into a family patrimony. The Politburo includes wives, a son-in-law, a former bodyguard, Mao's private secretary and Lin Piao's wife.

During the Chinese revolution the Chinese Communists called the usurpation of power in Kuomintang China by four families "the shame and misfortune of the Chinese people". Today China is once more ruled by an anti-popular group that strengthens its grip of the country by violence, terror and unbridled demagoguery.

Social relations are made to conform with Mao's idea of "the continuation of the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat". Lin Piao says: "Chairman Mao Tse-tung, for the first time in the theory and practice of the international communist movement, put forward the clear doctrine that after the basic completion of socialist transformation of ownership of the means of production, classes and the class struggle continue to exist, and the proletariat must continue to carry on the revolution."

The laws of class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat are major principles of Marxism-Leninism. Lenin's doctrine of the inevitability of struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism is one of the major weapons in the arsenal of the proletarian parties and has been confirmed and reconfirmed by the experience of socialist revolution.

The Maoists take these ideas, amputate them from their historical context and try to place them, thus distorted and mutilated, in the service of their ignoble aims.

Lenin pointed out that the question of "who beats whom" is decided at the stage of transition from capitalism to socialism; the Maoists insist that the issue remains in the balance throughout the period of communist construction. Lenin pointed out that the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is waged at the stage when socialism has not yet been built and, consequently, when hostile classes continue to exist within society: the Maoists assert that the class struggle continues after the triumph of socialism, in socialist society. Lenin pointed out that the culminating point in the class struggle is the socialist revolution, the seizing of

power by the proletariat: the Maoists maintain that the class struggle becomes more and more fiercer as society advances from capitalism to communism. Most important of all, Lenin demonstrated the inevitability of struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie resisting the revolution, and the struggle between proletarian and bourgeois ideology, whereas the Maoists aim not at struggle against the bourgeoisie but at struggle with Party and state workers, the Communists, the advanced workers, peasants and intellectuals who have opposed or refused to give active support to the personal regime of Mao Tse-tung. This is hardly the "class struggle of the proletariat", or "the continuation of the revolution". It is simply a group struggle for power, for personal influence. This "revolution" has all the features of counter-revolution.

The real purpose of the ideological theses and political slogans advanced at the Ninth Congress of the CPC and officially named "Mao Tse-tung's Thought" is seen when we compare the theory of the Maoists with their practice. Such comparison immediately reveals that the thesis of "strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat" is simply a cover for the struggle to affirm the dictatorship of Mao Tse-tung and his entourage, that the slogan "continuation of the revolution during the dictatorship of the proletariat" really stands for the destruction of all the political institutions of worker and peasant government as the result of a reactionary take-over, that the slogan "purge the Party of people who are following the capitalist path" means liquidation of the opponents of the personal dictatorship of Mao Tse-tung and Maoism, that the slogan "strengthen the role of the working class" is simply called upon to conceal the Maoists' reliance on special army units, isolated from the masses and set up in opposition to them, and on the petty-bourgeois strata corrupted by chauvinism, and, finally, that the slogan "defence of the purity of Marxism-Leninism" really means the implantation of Maoism and the "sinification of social-chauvinism".

A society built according to the principles of the "thoughts of Mao" is the antithesis of scientific socialism. In economics it means labour organised on army principles according to the triple union system "worker, peasant and soldier", the curbing of consumption, "conducting a policy of rationally low wages", "food for three people must be eaten by five",



the concentration of all accumulated wealth for the needs of "preparation for war" and the creation of a nuclear missile force. In social life it means the forced levelling of society and the reduction of every individual to the position of "a stainless screw", an "obedient buffalo", a "soldier" of Chairman Mao. In ideology it means preservation of the cultural backwardness of the bulk of the population, the forced indoctrination of the whole people in the spirit of the "Mao Tse-tung's Thoughts", and complete isolation from advanced world culture. In politics it is the complete abolition of the institutions of socialist democracy, the dictatorial regime of a narrow group of people led by Mao Tse-tung, the violation of all legality, the militarisation of the whole political structure of society, and systematic purges of "heretics" in the form of "cultural revolutions".

Such are the inevitable pernicious consequences of the "Mao Tse-tung's Thoughts", of the anti-humanitarian philosophy and policy of Mao Tse-tung. Such is the reactionary utopia anti-Communists are trying to present as a creative combination of Marxism-Leninism with Chinese conditions, a "new brand of socialism", a "creative contribution" and which the Maoists are trying to put into practice.

It is patently evident that Maoism is incompatible with Leninism. At the International Meeting held in 1969, the Communist and Workers' parties subjected the Maoist ideology to principled and scathing criticism. Maoism is a petty-bourgeois ideological and political trend, fundamentally alien to Marxism-Leninism, living parasitically at the expense of the principles of scientific socialism, and adroitly exploiting the strivings of the Chinese people to achieve socialism. It is a militaristic variety of social-chauvinism, its purposes being at variance with those of the world communist and liberation movements.

As Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, emphasised in the CC report to the 24th Party Congress, "...the Chinese leaders have put forward an ideological-political platform of their own, which is incompatible with Leninism on the key questions of international life and the world communist movement, and have demanded that we should abandon the line of the 20th Congress and the Programme of the CPSU".

For this reason the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

and its Central Committee have resolutely opposed the attempts to distort the Marxist-Leninist teaching, and to split the international communist movement and the ranks of the anti-imperialist fighters.

The 24th Party Congress approved this line of the CPSU Central Committee. The Congress resolution notes that the "CC CPSU had taken the only correct stand—a stand of consistently defending the principles of Marxism-Leninism, utmost strengthening of the unity of the world communist movement, and protection of the interests of our socialist Motherland". This position of the Leninist Party is firmly supported and approved by most of the Communists throughout the world, by the progressives fighting against imperialism, for peace, democracy and socialism.